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THE RULERS OF RUSSIA

BY

Hon. NORAH HEWITT

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TO

MY FATHER

WITH DEEP AFFECTION

AND RESPECT

JAN 4 1956

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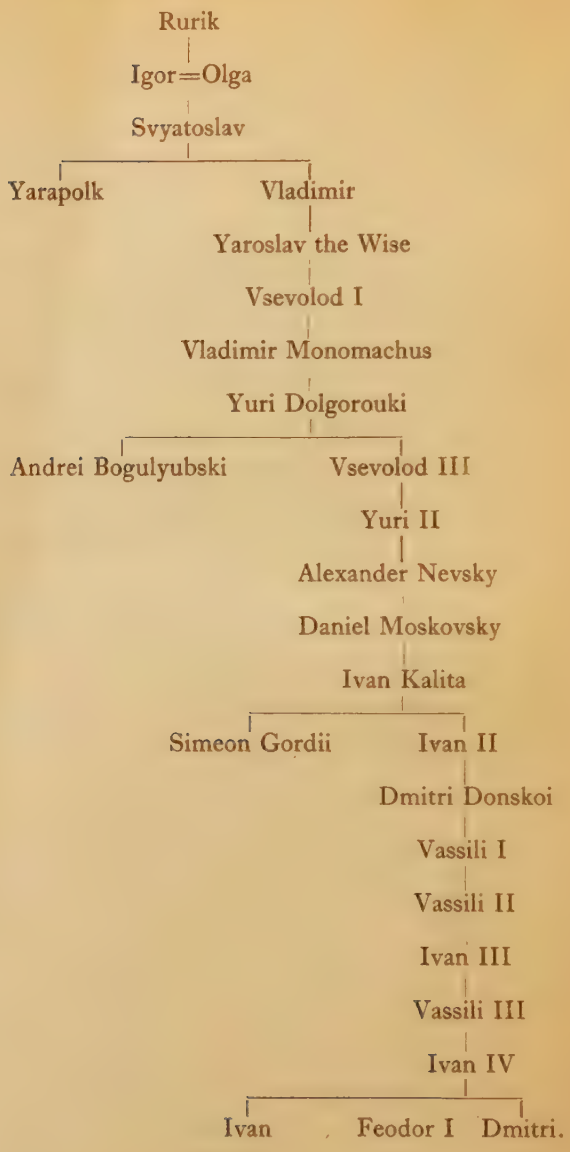

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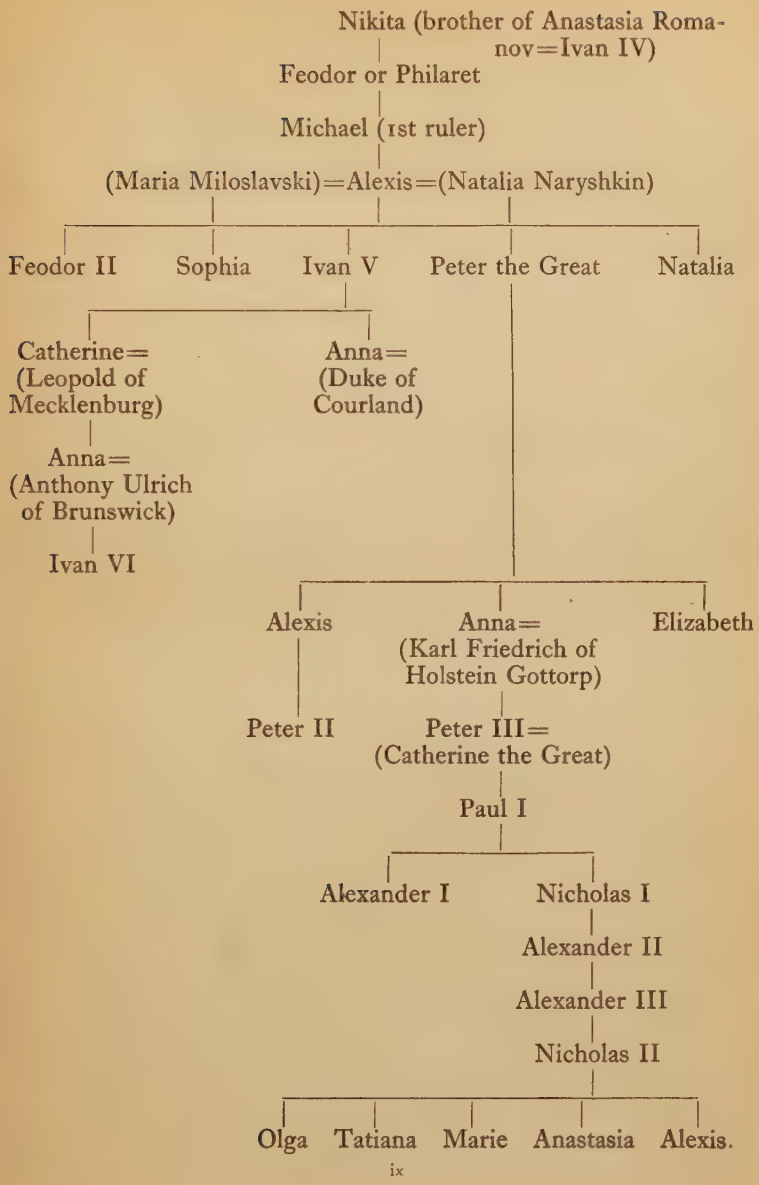

THE RULERS OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC AND BARBARIAN RUSSIA

A.D. 851–1216

INFORMATION concerning prehistoric Russia is uncertain, and mainly derived from the writings of the Greek emperors and chroniclers of the period, or from the reports of Jewish, Greek, and Arab merchants trading with the barbarians of south-eastern Europe.

During the eighth century, the Slavonic race, penetrating eastwards from the dense forests on the western slopes of the Carpathians, had gradually ousted the wild Scythian peoples who formed the original inhabitants, and had become the predominating element in that portion of the continent. Later, these Slavs had subdivided into many tribes, each bent on acquiring independent territory of its own. One of these tribes—the Polyans, or People of the Plains—migrating still farther east, to the land watered by the River Boristhenes or Dnieper, had settled themselves down there, and incidentally laid the foundation of the future Russian Empire. There they formed themselves into communities or settlements, and there they maintained themselves by agriculture, by predatory warfare on rival tribes, and by a brisk trade with the enterprising merchants of the Orient, who gladly exchanged the jewelled orna-

ments and metal-work of Byzantium, for the slaves furs, wax, linen, and other commodities of the north.

These early Russian settlers seem to have been a tall, fair-haired people, gregarious and agricultural in their tastes, great drinkers, quarrelsome amongst themselves, fierce and cruel to their foes, but otherwise peaceably disposed, and warriors more from necessity than inclination. Constant raids from surrounding tribes forced them to war and self-defence. They began to build themselves wooden stockades or fortresses for the better protection of their families and property. As these rough forts increased in size and number, so towns arose, to develop eventually into rich and powerful cities such as Kiev, Pskov, and Novgorod, the precursors of the urban republics of the next three centuries.

The government of each town or village was autonomous and democratic. It lay in the hands of the "Mir," or village council formed by the elders or chief men of the place, while the whole land came under the authority of the "Vietsche," or popular council, to which assembly every town was entitled to send a representative. Naturally, however, the real power and final voice in public matters belonged to whichever city was then in the ascendant, and able to enforce its wishes upon its weaker neighbours by reason of its superior wealth, strength, and political and commercial importance.

The religion of these early settlers showed much of the poetry and mysticism which still characterises the Russo-Slav. They were theists, adoring the one great God and Creator of the universe, from whom emanated all lesser deities, and to whom all were subordinated. They believed in destiny as ordained by Supreme Good, and they evinced a peculiar love and veneration for Nature in all her aspects. They worshipped the creative and regenerative powers of

sun and rain, and the spirits who ruled in the earth, air, and flood. They mourned the death of the sun, and on 21st December, the shortest day, they celebrated its re-birth amid universal rejoicings. In Spring they hailed the renewal of life, while on 24th June—the one night in the year when they thought that the language of animals could be understood, and that the secrets of Nature were revealed to man—they lauded the gods of fertility, with songs, feasts, and dances in honour of the wonders of creation. They believed in a future state spent in a paradise or garden, where the beauties of Nature were intensified, where all was verdure and blossom, and where the migratory birds spent the winter. Heaven to them meant a continuation of the material joys of this life. To equip the soul of the departed warrior for the next world therefore, the funeral pyre was heaped with the accessories of daily existence, together with the bodies of his slaves and horses, and that one of his many wives who gave supreme proof of her affection by voluntarily choosing to accompany her dead lord to Elysium.

Occasional seers appeared among the people, but there were no priests. The head of every family acted as his own Levite, and offered his own sacrifices and invocations to the special deity whose goodwill he most desired to obtain.

The population was divided into tens, hundreds, and thousands. Each unit was under a headman, who was primarily responsible to his immediate superior, and ultimately to the " thousandth man," who held authority directly from the elders, or from the military chiefs of the district.

These military chiefs were originally selected by the elders on account of their bravery, to defend the city and to lead the people in time of war. They were usually chosen from among the members of some one

leading family, and gradually usurped the power of military dictators. Thus dynasties of princes or overlords developed, who lived by the sword, recognised no authority but their own, and ruled supreme over the district under their jurisdiction and the territories which they acquired by conquest. Accompanied by their brothers-in-arms, or "Drujina" as their followers were called, they undertook independent raids against neighbouring tribes, and even against such distant countries as Greece, while to swell the number of their forces, they hired the services of Scandinavian mercenaries from the shores of the Gulf of Finland.

The Norsemen, or Varangians, thus acquired a footing in the land, of which they were quick to profit.

About the middle of the ninth century, they advanced into Russia in great numbers, overran the country, and soon made themselves masters of the land lying between the Gulf of Finland in the north and the River Dnieper in the south.

Chief among these Varangians were the warriors Askold and Dir, who conquered Kiev in 851, while Rurik in the north, settled by Lake Ladoga in 862, built Ladoga, and with his brothers, Sineus and Truvor, extended his rule over various cities, of which Novgorod was the most important.

Rurik died about the year 879, bequeathing his dominions and his infant son Igor to the guardianship of his friend and relative the valiant Oleg, surnamed the Wise, whose prowess as a warrior made him a hero to Russians and Norsemen alike, and whose adventures have filled the early chronicles with legendary tales concerning his deeds of bravery.

Ever bent on war, and tempted possibly by the reports of the beauty and wealth of the southern provinces, Oleg, on his ward's behalf, advanced against the chiefs Askold and Dir, treacherously overcame and

slew them both, and annexed their dominions. He then transferred his capital from Novgorod to Kiev—that fair city, destined soon to be known as "the mother of Russian towns," and already famous for her prosperity and for the extent of her trade with Byzantium. Thenceforward Kiev was regarded as foremost among Russian principalities. Her ruler was acknowledged as Grand Prince, or overlord, by his contemporaries, and her throne was inherited by the eldest male member of the royal family.

Oleg gradually reduced all Russia beneath his rule. Acting always in Igor's name, he extended his conquests in all directions, while he exacted tribute from the dependent tribes and established the supremacy of the house of Rurik so firmly, that throughout the two following centuries descendants of Rurik were chiefs of the different town-provinces which then composed the Russkaya Zemlya, or Russian land.

Oleg's greatest achievement, however, was his expedition against Byzantium, which was nominally undertaken in aid of his ally the Tsar of Bulgaria, but which was more probably the outcome of his own thirst for fame and adventure. The legends surrounding this enterprise are many. They relate the embarkation of Oleg's armament of 80,000 men in 2000 boats, and the perils of their journey to the Black Sea. There, further advance was found to be barred by a huge chain stretched across the entrance to the Bosphorus; but, nothing daunted, the Russians dragged their boats ashore, mounted them on wheels, unfurled their sails, and were blown by favourable winds to the gates of Byzantium itself. The inhabitants, terrified at the apparently miraculous approach of the barbarians, hastened to sue for peace, and concluded a treaty, by which they agreed to pay a heavy yearly tribute to their conquerors and to grant free trade and special privileges to all Russian merchants. Oleg then hung

his shield upon the golden gates of the city in token of his triumph and returned home, laden with the spoils of the eastern capital, while he carried with him, to preserve at Kiev, a copy of his compact with the Byzantine emperor.

Oleg died in 912, having governed Russia on Igor's behalf for thirty-three years, and extended his dominions from Ladoga to the Straits of the Bosphorus. Despite his love of bloodshed, he seems to have been a wise and good ruler according to the estimate of the time in which he lived, and to have done much to improve his country and increase its intercourse with other more civilised nations.

At Oleg's death, Igor assumed the reins of government for himself; but he was weak and indolent, possessed of neither his father's energy, nor the administrative abilities of his guardian. He undertook two expeditions against Byzantium, in the second of which he was so far successful as to enforce the payment of an increased yearly tribute. But he was treacherously killed in 945 by the Drevlyans, or "tree-folk," a vassal tribe, who, missing the iron hand of Oleg, had risen in revolt and refused to pay tribute, or to acknowledge Igor as their overlord. Tradition relates, that being taken prisoner, he was tied to two sapling trees and thus torn asunder. The Drevlyan chief, Malu, then cut off his head and converted the skull into a drinking-cup, which was engraved with the words, "Thou camest to take what was another's, and coming, didst lose what was thine own."

Igor's widow, Olga the Fair, next ruled over Kievite Russia, on behalf of her son Svyatoslav. Although advanced in years, she soon proved herself to be a woman of exceptional ability and statemanship. According to the accepted tenets of her day, she at once set herself to avenge her husband's murder, nor did she rest till by fair means and foul she had

extirpated the ruling house of the Drevlyans, destroyed Korestan their capital, slain the greater number of their warriors, and levied a heavy tribute from the remnant of the tribe.

This sacred duty accomplished, Olga turned her attention to the internal condition of her country and ruled wisely and well, besides doing her utmost to encourage commerce and to promote the welfare of her people. During the ten years of her administration she visited every corner of her dominions with untiring energy. She also built cities, inaugurated fisheries and other industries, established ferries across the larger rivers and reorganised the laws, of which as yet no recognised written code existed.

In 955, Olga resigned the government to Svyatoslav. Then, undeterred by the dangers of such a journey, she visited Byzantium in 957, for the double purpose of studying Christianity and furthering political and commercial intercourse between the two nations. Her fame had preceded her ; despite her sex she was treated with great honour by the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and having been received into the Greek Church, she returned to Russia, to do her utmost to convert her son, and to spread the Christian faith among the people. Her death, a few years later, put an end to her activities and deprived her country of one of the greatest of Russian reformers. She was canonised by the Church, and the monk Nestor—who lived during the twelfth century and who was the author of the most ancient Russian chronicle—eulogises her as " the forerunner of Christianity in Russia, as the morning star is the precursor of the sun, and the dawn is the precursor of the day. As the moon shines at midnight she shone in the midst of a pagan people."

Svyatoslav was a warrior of some renown, and his reign was marked by ceaseless wars with other tribes,

and by the struggle with the Byzantine Empire for the suzerainty of Bulgaria.

Ultimately the Greek emperor, John Zimices, triumphed over his northern rival. Svyatoslav was forced to withdraw into his own land ; but during his retreat, he was attacked and slain near the Cataracts of the Dnieper by his inveterate enemies, the Patzinaks, in 972.

His dominions were divided amongst his sons, but Yarapolk, the eldest, speedily attained the supremacy, and ousting his younger brothers from the principalities bequeathed them by their father, he ruled as sole lord of Kievite Russia for the next eight years.

The youngest of these brothers was named Vladimir, and was the offspring of Malyusha, a beautiful slave-girl in Olga's service, who had been promoted to the rank of one of Svyatoslav's many secondary wives. This Vladimir had inherited the principality of Novgorod, but being dispossessed by Yarapolk, he fled to Scandinavia, where he took refuge until he had collected sufficient warriors for his " Drujina " to enable him to regain his patrimony. About the year 980 he returned to Russia, defeated and slew his brother, and became in his turn the ruler of the provinces of Kiev and Novgorod and the accepted overlord of all the neighbouring princes.

Vladimir's military expeditions were many and successful, so that during the first few years of his dominion he extended his conquests towards the south and absorbed large portions of Poland, Galicia, and Volhynia, in which last-named province he founded the city to which he gave his name.

But the chronicles concerning Vladimir " Fair-Sun," as he was called, on account of his genial nature, are mostly occupied with his matrimonial adventures ; for this licentious prince, in addition to his numerous legitimate wives, possessed no fewer than 800 concu-

bines, whom he is said to have kept in three different parts of the country. Accustomed as the Russians had become to oriental polygamy, such a harem was considered excessive even in those days. It is therefore somewhat difficult to see in this barbarian sensualist the future christianiser of his country and one of the most popular saints of the early Russian Church. Such, however, he became. Partly, it may be supposed, from political motives, partly to enhance his own reputation and to emulate the progressive spirit of his more enlightened neighbours, Vladimir, about the year 988, decided to renounce his heathen gods, and to adopt the faith of one of the adjoining states with which he had occasional intercourse. Tradition relates that he sent for representatives of the Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Moslem systems to expound their creeds before him, but that he rejected the three first, with their rules anent fasting, abstinence and prayer, as too austere, and selected the last, with its gorgeous ritual and promises of pardon, as most suited to his needs.

The most potent inducement to this thirst for spiritual reform, however, is probably to be found in Vladimir's alliance with Constantine and Basil, the joint emperors of the East, who, about this time, called upon him for aid against their common foes, the Poles and Teutons. As a reward for his assistance, they promised him the hand of their sister Anna, together with a rich dowry, but on the condition that he would first embrace Christianity and consent to be baptised. To this Vladimir readily agreed, even ridding himself of his 800 odd wives in deference to the scruples of his new religion; but the princess proved less adaptable, for she altogether refused to marry the barbarian, of whose unsavoury reputation and uncouth manners she had doubtless already heard. Enraged at the delay, Vladimir invested the city of

Korsun in the Crimea, which he took after a siege of six months, and he would have attacked Byzantium, had not the Greek princess repented of her obduracy and declared herself willing to accept her fate and to sacrifice herself for her country.

On his return to Russia with his bride, Vladimir set himself with all a convert's zeal to eradicate paganism, and to establish Christianity throughout his dominions. This he did at the point of the sword, by destroying the wooden idols and by driving the people *en masse* into the rivers to be baptised. But although all his subjects conformed outwardly to the new faith, paganism remained in the land until well into the twelfth century.

Vladimir established schools and built many churches, including the cathedral at Kiev, which he dedicated to the Mother of God, and which is said to have been modelled from the famous St Sophia at Constantinople. He also introduced the first gold and silver coinage into Russia, a specimen of which was discovered in 1812, engraved with the words "Vladimir, his golden coin," and bearing the figure of Christ on one side, with that of Vladimir in his royal robes on the other.

In spite of his ardour as a Christian and a missionary, Vladimir seems to have feasted and drunk as royally after, as before his conversion, merely adding the saints' days to his calendar of carousals, and remembering to include the poor among the recipients of his post-prandial bounty. His demise in 1015 was universally lamented. He died in the odour of sanctity, according to the chronicles, and was canonised in 1257.

Vladimir at his death divided his dominions amongst his twelve sons and the other male members of his family. He thus once more split Russia into various independent principalities, and gave rise to the strife and bloodshed inevitably associated with such an

arrangement. This state of anarchy lasted until Yaroslav, Prince of Novgorod, following in his father's footsteps, had ejected his brothers from their territories, to establish himself as Grand Prince of Kiev, and reunite the disintegrated states in his own person.

Under this Yaroslav, surnamed the Wise, Kiev attained to the zenith of her prosperity. The " mother of Russian towns " was now the commercial as well as the political capital of the country, while her culture and her trade brought Russia into touch with the rest of Europe. Learning flourished, schools and even a public library existed, and Greek architects and artists beautified the churches and public buildings till Kiev almost rivalled Byzantium in her glory, and foreign merchants from all parts of the world flocked to attend the annual fairs held in her twelve great market-places. Political intercourse with western civilisation was constant. Russian princes visited the courts of European monarchs, while the four daughters of Yaroslav married respectively the prince of Norway, the kings of Poland and Hungary, and Henry I of France.

Yaroslav himself seems to have been a cultivated prince, with mental attainments and artistic tastes far in advance of his time and certainly of his nationality. He did much to raise the political *prestige* of his country and the intellectual level of his people, and he was the first legislator to codify the Russian laws, which he embodied in the " Russkaya Pravda " or Russian Rights. By this code all crimes, including murder, were punished by fines. The death of a noble cost his slayer 80 lbs. of silver, that of an ordinary man 40 lbs., and that of a woman only 20 lbs. Capital punishment was unknown ; but duels, the ordeal by fire and water, private revenge and blood feuds were openly encouraged.

From the death of Yaroslav, in 1054, dates the gradual decay of Kievite glory and the extinction of

that one brief gleam of civilisation which illumined the otherwise long and dreary period of Russian barbarism. Partitioned as usual among Yaroslav's numerous male relatives, Russia became once more a prey to the petty feuds of these minor principalities, and the next few years are mainly concerned with the struggles for supremacy between the rival chiefs.

One figure alone stands out against the ensanguined background of so much selfishness and intrigue—that of Vladimir Monomachus (1113–1125), a grandson of Yaroslav, who seems to have inherited much of his ancestor's personality, and to have been a strong, wise, and learned prince. He married Gytha, the daughter of Harold, the last Saxon king of England, and he is chiefly known to posterity through his "Po-outchenie" or Instructions, an interesting document written for his sons, which gives a vivid picture of the conditions, manners, and customs of his times.

Vladimir Monomachus was the last ruler of Kievite or undivided Russia. After his death Kiev ceased to occupy a foremost place among Russian cities.

Meanwhile, during the eleventh century, several of the more enterprising of the Kievite princes, who resented the democratic traditions of the southern cities, had emigrated to north-eastern Russia, to create new principalities for themselves and their descendants. Assisted by the "boyars" or warrior-nobles who accompanied them, they had expelled the Finnish tribes then occupying the land, and had made themselves masters of the region of the upper Volga, where they established themselves as independent despots. Thus Greater Russia, in opposition to Little or Kievite Russia, was evolved, and that system of absolute autocracy was inaugurated which was to crush the people and prove the ruin of the nation in years to come.

Gradually new provinces developed, each under its own ruler, of which provinces Suzdal was the most

important, with Vladimir as its capital. Suzdal or Muscovy, as it came later to be called, was created by Yuri Dolgorouki (a son of Vladimir Monomachus) out of the vast forest and marshes lying at the junction of the Volga and the Oka. Under the fostering care of Yuri's son, Andrei Bogulyubski (1157–1174), Suzdal became supreme in Greater Russia, whilst Vladimir increased in power and wealth till it emulated the glory of Kiev itself, and eventually entirely eclipsed the " mother of towns."

Determined to brook no rival in the splendour of his court and capital, Bogulyubski led an expedition against the southern city, and subdued it after a siege of three days, after which he plundered it so ruthlessly, that all its treasures were transferred to his own metropolis and the pride and supremacy of Kiev were destroyed for ever.

The one strong personality of his time, and the precursor of autocracy in Russia, Andrei Bogulyubski held that the principality he and his father had created, belonged to him alone, by right of possession and inheritance. " I have made it, it is mine," was his motto, and he declined to share his dominions with his brothers, or to treat his boyars and Drujina on the traditional terms of equality. They were his subjects ; henceforth the will of the prince was to supersede that of the people, and despotism was to replace the democracy which had flourished till then in the old town-provinces.

But the times were not yet ripe for the monarchical form of government which Andrei strove so hard to establish. In the attempt to assert his own supremacy, he came into collision with the lawless and independent boyars, many of whom he banished, and one of whom he slew, to be in his turn assassinated by the relatives of his victim in 1174.

His only son, Mstislav, died young, but Bogulyubski

endeavoured to establish the custom of direct inheritance, and by excluding for the first time all his other male relatives, to transmit his principality intact to his immediate next-of-kin. The evils of disintegration and civil war, which he had thus hoped to avert, were but aggravated by this arrangement ; and his death was the signal for the usual feuds to break out between the rival claimants to his dominions.

There were at this time 64 principalities, ruled over by 293 independent princes, between whom there were no less than 83 civil wars in the course of the next two and a half centuries. Each ruler vied with the other for the supremacy of his title and estates, and Russia for the next 250 years was devastated by the internal strife resulting from this lust for bloodshed and self-aggrandisement. The struggle was between prince and prince, between the Old Russia and the New ; but it was also between class and class ; between the boyars and the landowners on the one hand and democracy and serfdom on the other. Regardless of the misery of the hapless peasantry, the princes and boyars fought amongst themselves, to assert their independence and to maintain their rights to lands they possessed, or wished to obtain. The great urban republics, such as Pskov, Novgorod, and Smolensk, fought, as at the battle of Lipetsk in 1216, to preserve their ancient liberties and the democratic conditions of which the nobles wished to deprive them. Patriotism was unknown ; each man contended for himself. Feudalism did not exist in Russia until the fifteenth century, so that there was no head or social system capable of evolving unity and order from the universal chaos. It was a return to the Dark Ages, and with the advent of the thirteenth century yet greater misfortunes befell the nation, which still further retarded her progress and civilisation.

CHAPTER II

THE MONGOL SUPREMACY

1224–1462

In 1224, the terror-stricken inhabitants of the south-eastern frontiers, fleeing inland like birds before a storm, roused general consternation in Russia with the news of the rapid approach of a swarm of savage warriors of inhuman aspect, whom none could withstand, and who destroyed, murdered, and pillaged all before them. The sudden appearance of these typical Mongols, with their thick, flat noses, their slanting eyes and shaven heads, was enough to overawe the stoutest heart; nor were their habits of eating raw flesh and of drinking the warm blood of horses, with other peculiarities of diet, calculated to lessen the universal horror and disgust which they inspired. Mounted on horses, camels, and buffaloes, they moved like a whirlwind across the Russian plains, dealing death and destruction wherever they went, and mercilessly slaughtering all who withstood them.

These were the hosts of Ghenghiz Khan, under Jugi Khan his son—the Kipchak, or Golden Horde of Mongols and Tartars from the northern slopes of the Altai or Golden Mountains of Siberia. They had already overrun China, Persia, and the greater part of Central Asia, and were now moving westward, intent on conquering the unknown lands which stretched before them.

Alarmed at the report of the fugitives, and united

for once in the face of this appalling danger, the Russian princes collected a large army, and in the hope of stemming the tide of invasion, they met the enemy on the banks of the Kalka, near Lake Azov. But they were outnumbered, and, in spite of a fierce resistance, were utterly defeated. Ten thousand men from Kiev alone are said to have fallen on that disastrous day ; six princes and many of the boyars were slain, while three princes, who were taken prisoners, were crushed to death between the boards on which the Tartars sat the while and ate their dinner.

Strange to say, the Khan did not pursue his victory. Instead of advancing farther into Russia, he returned to Asia by way of the Caspian Sea, leaving behind him a bloodstained trail of mutilated victims and ravaged cities to testify to the completeness of his triumph. Except for a brief reappearance in 1226, a period of comparative peace ensued, but it was the calm before the storm. Thirteen years later the tempest burst with redoubled fury over Russia.

According to the chronicles, the year 1237 was ushered in by a series of calamities and unfavourable portents. Drought, famine, disease, destructive fires, a terrifying eclipse, huge comets, all pointed, it was felt, to the wrath of God, and to some great evil yet to come. Towards the close of the year these omens were fulfilled. Batu Khan, a grandson of Ghenghiz, at the head of 500,000 of his yelling, murderous fiends, entered Russia from the east, defeated the Russian armies at Kolomna on the Oka, and again near the Sit, in Novgorod, and speedily overran the whole country.

Isolated from western civilisation as she was, both politically and geographically, Russia's appeals for aid went unnoticed by her European neighbours, while her internal dissensions prevented her from presenting a solid front in that time of national crisis. She therefore fell an easy prey to the Mongols, and it seemed as

if nothing could resist the progress of the invading hosts.

In little more than a month, fourteen cities had surrendered to the Khan; for barbarians as the Tartars were, they were adepts in all the arts of war; with their battering rams, their earthworks, their balls of fire, and other contrivances, they had reduced the besieging of towns to a science. The cities were plundered and sacked, their inhabitants either massacred, or deported as slaves, the country was devastated, and in a short time Russia became almost depopulated. In the words of the chronicler, "Our churches are demolished, our sanctuaries desecrated, and the sacred vessels defiled. The bodies of our priests have been cast out as carrion, and the land is saturated with the blood of our fathers and brothers, as with water. Vanished are the strongholds of our princes and rulers; even the brave have fled in terror, and our brothers and our children have been carried into captivity. The grass is growing over our village streets, our land has become the prey of the alien, and the fruit of our labour is enjoyed by the infidel."

Alone amongst all its contemporaries, the great commercial centre of Novgorod was spared, for the Khan feared to be engulfed in the surrounding swamps; but Kiev was besieged and utterly destroyed in 1240, only a heap of ruins being left to mark the site of the once fair and prosperous "mother of towns."

After the sack of Kiev, the Khan completed the subjugation of Russia, advanced further into Europe, crossed the Carpathians, and entered Hungary with the intention of invading Austria.

There, however, he was met by the united forces of the Moravians, Poles, Hungarians, and Austrians, and being defeated at the Battle of Liegnitz in 1241, Batu beat a hasty retreat through Russia to the Volga. On the banks of that river he founded Sarai in Astrakhan,

the future capital of the Golden Horde. Western Europe was saved, but at the expense of Russia, which, reduced to the position of a vassal state of the Mongol Empire, lay helpless at the feet of her conquerors for the next two hundred years, yielding tribute and a servile obedience to the Khan she was powerless to resist. At Sarai, the Tartars established a court of oriental splendour, the luxury of which was maintained by the taxes extorted from the miserable people. Thence they ruled Russia, and thither the princes were forced to journey in person, to acknowledge the Khan's supremacy and to do homage for their estates, the official recognition of their title to which—by Yarlyik, or letters patent—had then to be purchased by rich presents and lavish bribes.

While Batu Khan was besieging Kiev in the south, northern Russia was invaded by the Swedes and Germans at the instigation of Pope Gregory IX., who seized the opportunity of the national humiliation at the hands of the Mongols, to declare a holy war against the pagans of the north, and to incite Catholic Europe to aid him in suppressing the schism existent between the Eastern and Western Churches since 1054.

Under their regent, Birger Yarl, the Swedes gladly embarked on this congenial enterprise, and sailed down the Gulf of Finland into the River Neva, with the intention of entering Lake Ladoga and attacking their great commercial rival, the city of Novgorod.

The Prince of Novgorod at that time was Alexander Yaroslavovitch, the son of Yaroslav, Grand Duke of Suzdal. He proved himself fully equal to the emergency, and was the saviour of his people. On 15th July 1240, he fell upon the Swedes as they lay encamped on the banks of the Neva, and after a fierce battle which lasted all day, he defeated and put them to flight. In honour of this victory, Alexander was given the title " of the Neva " by the grateful Nov-

gorodians, and it is as Alexander Nevski that he has since been known to posterity.

The crusade against Russian schism had been joined also by the two great German orders of chivalry, the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword, who had constituted themselves the protectors of Christianity and who aimed ostensibly at universal conversion to Catholicism by force of arms. During the eleventh century these two fraternities had conquered and settled in Livonia, since when, perpetual friction had existed between them and the republics of Pskov and Novgorod, as much on political and commercial as on religious grounds.

They now crossed the frontier and seized the city of Pskov, whence they inaugurated a widespread system of brigandage, which terrorised the whole province and threatened the prosperity of all northern Russia. Alexander, once more called to his country's aid, advanced against the robber chiefs, captured the fortress of Koporye and having retaken Pskov, caused seventy of the knights to be beheaded, while he sent the rest in chains to Novgorod.

Early in 1242, to avenge this defeat, the German Orders assembled in great numbers under their Grand Master, at Lake Tchoudovo or Peipus. There, on the frozen lake, the famous battle of "The Blood Bath on the Ice" was fought, resulting in the complete overthrow of the Knights, with a loss of more than half their force. Peace was soon afterwards declared between the Germans and the two republics; and warned by this experience, the Papacy desisted from further attempts to repair the breach between the Churches of the East and West by force of arms. In later years the gentler resources of intrigue and diplomacy were tried, but with equal unsuccess, so that the tenets of the Orthodox Greek Church have always remained the religion of the Russian nation.

Alexander Nevski had next to cope with the united Poles and Lithuanians, who, relying on the country's exhaustion after so many struggles, entered Russia and attacked Novgorod. A desultory war of some years' duration ensued, much blood was shed and many battles were fought before Alexander succeeded in defeating the invaders and compelling them to withdraw into their own land.

Its enemies thus disposed of, the principality of Novgorod, with its great independent city republics of Pskov and Novgorod, increased in power and commercial importance till its territory included the greater part of northern Russia, from the White Sea on the one hand, to the Ural Mountains on the other.

Novgorod, moreover, was the only province owning no allegiance to the Golden Horde. But at last, in 1246, Batu Khan, jealous of this independence, summoned its ruler to Sarai, to render homage for his estates, in common with the other subjugated princes. Deeming discretion the better part of valour, and dreading to renew the horrors of a Tartar invasion, Alexander felt that he had no choice but to obey. He therefore presented himself at the oriental court without delay. The Khan, to whom Alexander's name and fame were not unknown, treated him with honour, but compelled him to journey on into Tartary, to pay his respects in person to the Chief Khan, the Emperor of the Mongols, then at Karakorum, in the Desert of Gobi. Here again he was graciously received, confirmed in his estates of Kiev and Novgorod and eventually recognised as Grand Duke of Suzdal, then the premier Russian principality.

By this politic submission Alexander saved his territories from annihilation for the moment. But, on the death of Batu, in 1255, his successor, Ahmed Khan, threatened to invade northern Russia in his own interests. Once more Alexander journeyed to

Sarai, to avert the danger by substantial presents and the promise of a yearly tribute from his hitherto free province.

In 1261, the Novgorodians, exasperated beyond endurance by the oppressions of the Baskaki, or Tartar tax-gatherers, who had been quartered upon them, rose in revolt against these extortioners, some of whom they murdered, while they forcibly ejected the remainder from their midst. For the third time their now aged prince presented himself as a humiliated suppliant on his people's behalf, for the Khan's clemency; but only after a whole year of intercession at the Tartar court did he succeed in appeasing the Mongol's wrath. Alexander returned to Russia in 1263, but the mortifications and hardships he had undergone proved too much for him and he died the same year.

Acquiescence in the Mongol supremacy had now become the order of the day and continued for the next hundred years, the Russian princes having almost ceased to resent a bondage which they looked upon as inevitable. The Khan's power over life and death, his right to arbitrate in their personal feuds and to refuse or confer the Yarlyik entitling them to their own dominions were never questioned. It seemed as if the spirit of Russian independence had died out for ever.

The corrupt rule of her conquerors left an indelible stain on the national character, while the Church, although favoured and protected by the Khan, was powerless to stem the tide of general degradation. Bribery, corruption, brutality, and licentiousness prevailed among the princes, who, oppressed themselves, in turn oppressed their people and vented their own humiliations at the hands of their oriental masters upon the unhappy peasantry.

The ruthless taxation of the nation increased; but after many risings against the Tartar tax-gatherers

had occurred, the system was changed and the taxes were farmed out to the native princes, who thus became agents of the Khan's administration and recognised officials of the Mongol rule. The sufferings of the people, however, were augmented rather than lessened by this demoralising arrangement, for the princes enriched themselves at the expense of their own countrymen, even more unscrupulously than had the Baskaki.

Of these exalted tax-collectors the princes of Moscow (or Muscovy, as Suzdal came to be called) seem to have been the most inhuman and rapacious. Often they exacted as much as double the amount of tribute due, that they might retain the half for themselves and they condemned such unfortunates as failed to satisfy their demands, to the horrors of torture and slavery. By these means, by sycophancy, by lavish bribes and even by intermarriage with the Golden Horde, the Muscovite princes increased in power and honour with the Khan, while their ill-gotten wealth enabled them to purchase successive Yarlyiks, conferring on them the coveted title of Grand Duke, the premier rank among their fellows.

Conspicuous among these unprincipled rulers for rapacity and intrigue were Ivan Khalita, or "The Purse" (1328–1340), and his son and successor Simon Gordii, or "The Proud" (1340–1353). Trading on Tartar cupidity and aided by Tartar troops, each in turn purchased or annexed large additions to his patrimony. In this way they raised Muscovy to the foremost place among Russian principalities and increased her power till she menaced the supremacy of the Mongol rule itself.

During this century the Tartar pre-eminence had been further weakened by Gedemin of Lithuania, who, in 1320, annexed the whole of southern or Kievite Russia, and added it to his own already vast dominions.

The territories of this powerful prince then extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and he thus shared the suzerainty of Russia with the Khan. The Ukraine, or Little Russia, was under Lithuanian rule, whilst Greater Russia—comprising the principalities of Novgorod, Tver and Ryazan, with the urban republics of Pskov and Novgorod—acknowledged the supremacy of the Golden Horde.

Ivan II (1353–1359), a younger son of the infamous Khalita, but himself one of the few estimable princes of his evil race, died of the Black Death, then ravaging Europe and especially virulent in Russia. After an interregnum of four years, he was succeeded as Grand Duke of Muscovy by his son, Dmitri IV, in 1363, and with the advent of this young ruler, the knell of Tartar ascendancy began to sound.

Astutely aware of the increasing decadence of the oriental empire and that the times were propitious for renouncing its authority, Dmitri commenced hostilities by refusing to pay the customary tribute, rendered yearly by his predecessors. In consequence, Mamai, the then Khan of the Golden Horde, prepared to enforce his claims by invading Russia.

Supported by the clergy, who preached a holy war and the deliverance of the nation from the yoke of the infidel, and blessed by Serge Radonejski, one of the most famous of Russian saints, Dmitri appealed to his countrymen for aid ; nor did he appeal in vain. All the princes, with the exception of his inveterate foes the rulers of Ryazan and Tver, flocked to his standard, so that he soon found himself at the head of a large and enthusiastic army. Yagiello, prince of Lithuania, and the princes of Ryazan and Tver, who counted on Dmitri's defeat and hoped to partition his dominions between them, proffered their services to the Khan, but their proposals were refused.

On 8th September 1380, the two armies met at

Kulikovo on the Don and a sanguinary battle ensued, which resulted in the total defeat of the Mongols. At first the Tartars had the advantage. Their cavalry rode down the Russian infantry and trampled them underfoot, till the ground for a distance of ten miles round was strewn with the bodies of the slain, while many of the living were buried beneath the heaps of dead. The Russians were dismayed by the fury of the Tartar onslaught and greatly outnumbered by their opponents. They began to give ground and would have been defeated, but for the opportune arrival, at the eleventh hour, of a large body of fresh troops under Dmitri's cousin, the young prince Vassili. Taken by surprise at this unexpected attack and surrounded on all sides by their adversaries, it was the turn of the Mongols to be distressed. They fled, panic-stricken ; a general rout followed and the day was gained for Russia. Fearing the dangers of the Steppes, Dmitri Donskoi—as he was called in honour of this great victory—forbad further pursuit of the foe. But Mamai was attacked during his retreat to Sarai by Tochtamyish, a rival khan, and was again defeated. He subsequently took refuge in the Crimea, where he was soon afterwards assassinated.

The power of the Tartars was not yet extinct. A whole century elapsed before Russia was finally able to free herself from their yoke. Nevertheless the rule of the Golden Horde was on the wane and the battle on the Don marked the first break in its supremacy.

In 1382, Timur the Tartar invaded Muscovy, captured Moscow, massacred 24,000 of the inhabitants and burnt the city to the ground. A few years later the dreaded Tamerlane also appeared before Moscow and threatened its destruction. The city was spared however, for the Mongol emperor was obliged to withdraw his troops and turn his attention to the suppression of Lithuania and the chastisement of the

Golden Horde, who had attempted to render themselves independent of his authority.

Dmitri Donskoi died in 1389, at the early age of forty. During his reign, civil wars between the rival principalities, predatory raids by Tartars and Lithuanians, national calamities, such as pestilence and famine, all combined to weaken and depopulate the provinces of north-eastern Russia. Nevertheless, through Dmitri's wisdom and foresight, the power of Muscovy continued to increase and was still further extended under his son, Vassili I (1389–1425), and grandson, Vassili II, the Blind (1425–1462), both of whom possessed to the full the aggressive and acquisitive instincts of their race.

The sovereignty of the Muscovite princes was universally recognised. Although a few of the rival principalities such as Tver and the cities of Pskov and Novgorod, refused to acknowledge their supremacy, the absorption of such territories was merely a question of time, and took place under Ivan III.

CHAPTER III

THE MUSCOVITE EMPIRE

1462–1584

Vassili II was succeeded as Grand Duke of Muscovy by his son, Ivan III, whose accession marked the beginning of a long autocracy, which, although it enslaved and brutalised the people, at least transformed Muscovy from a petty principality to an empire and a great European power.

Clever, pitilessly cruel, unscrupulous, cunning, grossly superstitious and a coward, Ivan seems to have been devoid of virtues and to have combined the inherited failings of his race with the worst vices of the Oriental. In appearance, judging by existing portraits, he was a tall, gaunt, morose-looking man, with heavy features, the traditional long beard of the Slav and large gloomy eyes, at whose sinister gaze women are said to have fainted with terror. Woe to him or her unfortunate enough to incur the displeasure of this inhuman prince! Branding, scourging with leathern whips, the loss of eyes, nails, or tongue were but the least of the punishments inflicted, whilst capital crimes were requited with death by slow torture, such as being roasted on a spit before huge fires, staked on red-hot lances, or other torments too horrible to mention.

Nevertheless, there were elements of greatness in Ivan III which enabled him to purpose and accomplish much that was beneficial to his country. Imbued

with Byzantine theories of despotism, he came to the throne determined to render Muscovy a great and independent nation, with himself as its supreme head ; and he succeeded in his ambition.

With this object in view, he was obliged first to suppress his rivals. Sometimes in open warfare therefore, but more often by intrigue and double-dealing, he gradually absorbed the neighbouring provinces, or reduced them to the position of vassal states. Tver and Pskov, hoping by submission to retain some measure of their ancient liberties, yielded to his authority ; but Novgorod, always a thorn in the side of Muscovy, remained proudly aloof and, alarmed at her rival's growing power, even contemplated an alliance with Poland.

In 1470, Ivan sent a large army against this republic, which first laid waste the surrounding country and then besieged and took the city. In the wholesale massacre which followed, 27,000 of the inhabitants are said to have perished ; 300 of the chief citizens were removed to Moscow ; and Novgorod, robbed of her treasures, her buildings destroyed, her commercial prosperity ruined, lost her importance for ever.

War, however, was not Ivan's favourite means of increasing his power. He preferred the subtler and safer methods of diplomacy. He greatly augmented his dominions and his political prestige by judicious family marriages. His sister was contracted to the prince of Ryazan ; and after the death of his first wife Maria of Tver, in 1467, he himself espoused, in 1472, Sophia Palæologus, niece of Constantine, the last Greek emperor. After the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, Sophia had taken refuge in Italy with the remnants of her family. She was heiress to the Byzantine empire and possessed of a considerable dowry, so that, although an exile, she was still a desirable match for the " Ruler of all Russia,"

as Ivan now styled himself, upstart though he was. A clever, cultivated, ambitious woman, she exercised great influence over her husband and was the moving spirit in many of his schemes for improving his country and bringing it once more into touch with western civilisation. Many Greek and Italian artists had followed her from Rome to Moscow, who not only beautified the city, but helped her to introduce art and literature amongst the illiterate barbarians of the northern capital. Foremost among these artists was the famous Italian, Rodolfo da Fioravanti, who built two cathedrals and several other edifices in Moscow.

When Russia had thus been brought to the same intellectual level as her neighbours, Europe awoke once more to the fact of her existence, and diplomatic relations, long interrupted by the Mongol invasion, were resumed with contemporary monarchs. To foreigners, however, accustomed to the luxury and refinement of the Renaissance, then at its height all over the continent, the thinly veiled savagery of Ivan and his people was distasteful ; and beyond political communication, there was as yet little or no intercourse between Russia and other countries.

At his wife's instigation, Ivan assumed the Greek emblem of the double-headed eagle, which, until erased by recent events, has ever since remained the arms of Imperial Russia. This act, which proclaimed him, as Sophia's consort, to be the heir to the Byzantine empire and the head of all Orthodox Greek believers, considerably enhanced his dignity and prestige in the eyes of Europe and the Slavonic states.

Meanwhile internal dissensions had greatly enfeebled the power of the Golden Horde, which nominally still exercised the overlordship of Russia, but was too corrupt and degraded to interfere with the growing independence of its great vassal. Already several of the tributary states, such as Astrakhan and

the Crimea, had taken advantage of this decay to renounce the Mongol supremacy and at last Ivan, spurred to martial action by his ambitious wife and by the more patriotic of his boyars, determined to liberate Muscovy likewise from the Tartar yoke.

In 1478 he advanced against Sarai, at the head of 15,000 men. The opposing forces met on opposite banks of the River Oka, but, after facing each other for weeks, a sudden panic seized the two armies, so that both simultaneously struck camp and fled, without exchanging a single blow. Russia was free and the dreaded spectre of the Golden Horde had vanished into thin air.

More actively obstructive to Ivan's ambition than the effete Mongol, was Lithuania, always Muscovy's most powerful foe and doubly offensive since its annexation of Little Russia in the previous century. For political reasons, Ivan had married his daughter to Alexander, prince of the joint kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania; but friction between the two monarchs was incessant. Finally, in 1494, Ivan picked a quarrel with his son-in-law and declared war, on the flimsy pretext that the agreement concerning his daughter's freedom to practise her own religion had been disregarded. In the struggle which followed, Alexander was beaten and in return for peace, was obliged to restore to his father-in-law several provinces in south-western Russia, including Smolensk and portions of Kiev.

By these acquisitions and by the subjection of Bulgaria a few years previously, Muscovite territory was enormously increased. Ivan now united under his rule almost all northern and southern Russia, and as a consolidated nation Muscovy had become a premier power in Europe and a strength with which to reckon.

Nevertheless, her internal development had not kept

pace with her political progress. Civilisation was almost unknown ; the great nobles were illiterate barbarians and the condition of the Russian peasants was such as to provoke the wondering pity of all Europe. In the upper classes, the intemperance and brutality of the Slav were joined to the licentiousness and duplicity of the East. Ivan's despotic nature and iron will broke the power of the unruly boyars, rendering them entirely subservient to himself ; but, although he curtailed their authority, he could not prevent their oppression of the serfs, whom they reduced to a state of abject misery.

The system of taxation was the same as under the Mongol rule. The taxes were farmed out to the nobles, who robbed the people right and left, that they might enrich themselves. In the words of Giles Fletcher, the English ambassador to Muscovy at the beginning of the sixteenth century : " This great oppression over the poor commons, maketh them to have no courage in following their trades, for that the more they have, the more danger they are in, not only of their goods, but of their lives also. And if they have anything, they conceal it all they can, sometimes conveying it into monasteries, sometimes hiding it under the ground and in woods, as men are wont to do in fear of a foreign invasion."

Laws existed, and were reorganised under Ivan III ; but they were unequally administered, with one law and set of penalties for the nobles and another for the common people. The peasants were bondslaves, deprived of rights even over their own bodies. Brutally maltreated by their masters, robbed and oppressed by all and sundry, taxed beyond their means, the people became servile from fear and endeavoured to escape the notice of their lords by an abject submission.

The condition of women was wretched. Those of the upper classes were condemned to the degrading

seclusion of the " terem " or Russian harem, while the wives and daughters of the peasantry were regarded as little better than the cattle, whose comparatively easy lot they must often have envied.

After a reign of forty-three years, Ivan III died in 1505. He had raised his country from insignificance to comparative importance. He had emancipated Russia from the Tartar yoke; and by successfully resisting the encroachments of western powers, he had extended his rule from the White Sea to the River Dnieper. But his arbitrary despotism had crushed the spirit of his people, retarded their civilisation, and hindered commercial enterprise. As Hospodar, or Ruler of United Russia, he is looked upon by many as the first national Tsar, although the title was not definitely assumed till the reign of Ivan IV.

On the death of Ivan's son by his first wife, his grandson became the rightful heir to the throne; but, through the machinations of the Empress Sophia, Ivan bequeathed his dominions to her son Vassili, who succeeded his father as Vassili III (1505–1533).

Aided and abetted by his mother, the new ruler pursued the aggressive policy of his predecessor, and added greatly to his already vast dominions by further conquests over the Tartars and Lithuanians. He also annexed the hitherto independent province of Ryazan, and completed the subjection of Pskov, which under his father's administration had been allowed to retain a certain degree of liberty.

Vassili III died in 1533, after an uneventful reign of twenty-eight years, an interesting record of which is preserved in the writings of Baron Sigismund Heberstein, the then German ambassador to the court of Russia. He was succeeded by his son Ivan IV, the Terrible.

With the easy morality of his time, Vassili, some few years before his death, had divorced and imprisoned

his first wife on account of her sterility. In reality he wished to clear the way to his union with Helena Glinski, the lovely daughter of a Lithuanian refugee, who in due course presented him with two sons. Ivan, the eldest, being only three years old at the time of his father's death, his mother assumed the regency in accordance with Slavonic law. She ruled as an absolute autocrat for the next five years, and shared her authority with none save her lover and master-of-the-horse, Prince Telepniev Obolenski. A reign of terror followed, for Helena—the Drinker of Blood, as she was called—surpassed her predecessors in ferocious cruelty, and slaughtered all who resisted her decrees. At last, in 1538, the nobles, disgusted at her crimes, rose in revolt and overpowered her. The Regent was poisoned, and her accomplice, Prince Obolenski, was thrown into prison, where he died of starvation.

Such were the early associations of the little Tsar, naturally nervous and hypersensitive, and at this time a precocious, observant, self-conscious child of eight.

The Council of Boyars governed the country in his name, under the regency of Prince Shiuski ; but, owing to the constant feuds and factions between them, their rule was far from beneficial to the nation. Everyone vied with the others for place and power, and so fearful were the Shiuskis of rival influence over the prince's mind, that they removed or slew anyone for whom he showed the least affection. Even his nurse was taken from him, while his favourite friend and playfellow, Voronzov, was imprisoned, and would have been killed, but for Ivan's agonised tears and entreaties.

The child's mental and moral education was utterly neglected. Nevertheless, since he was naturally intelligent, he read everything on which he could lay hands, and acquired a good knowledge of history, Greek, and the writings of the early Fathers. Alternately slighted

and flattered, deprived of every natural amusement and affection, his evil propensities unchecked, his few virtues repressed, what wonder that the boy grew up utterly corrupt and a byword throughout the ages for ferocity and vice? Some historians have attributed the abnormal depravity of Ivan's later years to insanity, and they maintain that his brain, already affected by the horrors he witnessed in infancy, was further unbalanced by the uncontrolled gratification of his inherently evil instincts. Be that as it may, it is at all events the most merciful judgment posterity can pass on this "religious monster" as he has been called.

Naturally cruel and violent, he stabbed or tortured his servants for the most trivial offences, threw his dogs from his palace windows, that he might enjoy the sight of their agonies as they lay writhing on the ground below, or, at the head of a troop of his boy companions, he rode at full gallop through the crowded streets of Moscow, killing or wounding such of the citizens as could not get out of his way in time.

Endless palace conspiracies, the evil examples of his uncles, the Glinskis, and the selfish intrigues of his constantly changing governors fostered the boy's faults and imbued him with an inveterate hatred of the boyars which lasted all his life.

In 1543, the overthrow of Prince Shiuski enabled Prince Byelski, the head of the opposing faction, to assume the regency. He ruled well, but was in his turn deposed and strangled by his enemies in 1545, when Prince Shiuski once more returned to power. His resumption of office, however, was cut short by illness, and his brother, Prince Andrei Shiuski, succeeded him, only to be crushed by the united efforts of the Glinskis and of Makarius, the clever but unscrupulous Metropolitan of Moscow. According to tradition, the Glinskis delivered over Prince Andrei to the tender mercies of the young Tsar, who, glad to avenge his own

wrongs at the hands of the Shiuski family, ordered him to be torn to pieces by the hounds in his stable-yard.

Ivan was now fast growing up, his every whim gratified, his vices fostered, his time spent, not in preparation for his high position, but in the wildest excesses, varied by superstitious pilgrimages to shrines and monasteries in search of the absolution he knew himself to have forfeited by his crimes.

At seventeen he came of age, and in January 1547 was crowned with much pomp and ceremony by Makarius at Moscow—the first Tsar of All the Russias to assume that proud title, as it was the first ceremony of the kind witnessed by the Russian people. The cap used at this, and at all subsequent coronations of the Tsars of Russia, was that presented by Constantine Monomachus, the Byzantine emperor, to his grandson Vladimir Monomachus, and by him bequeathed to his son Yuri Dolgorouki, the founder of Moscow.

His coronation over, Ivan turned his attention to matrimony, and in accordance with Byzantine custom, 1500 young girls, chosen for their rank and beauty from among the noblest families in Russia, were sent to Moscow and paraded before him. The Tsar selected a member of the provincial nobility, the lovely Anastasia Romanov, who thus laid the fortunes of her family, and became indirectly the foundress of the future imperial dynasty of Russia. In spite of his inherent profligacy, Ivan seems to have been truly attached to his first wife, who bore him two sons, Ivan and Feodor, and exercised a restraining influence over him till her death—some say by poison—in 1560.

Ivan was now the nominal ruler of his own dominions, but, intent on enjoyment, he interfered little in affairs of state, and left all real power in the hands of the Glinskis. It was death to hinder the imperial pleasures by the obtrusion of public matters, and strangulation was the usual penalty for such indiscretion. In the

first year of his reign, two envoys, sent from Pskov to plead the cause of that oppressed city, had the misfortune to present themselves before the Tsar just as he was going out hunting. Enraged at the interruption to his sport, he ordered them to be soaked in brandy and set on fire, as a warning to future petitioners.

Soon after these events, a terrible fire broke out in Moscow, which devastated the city, rendered half the population homeless, and caused the death of nearly 2000 of the inhabitants. Like Nero at Rome, the Tsar is said to have watched the conflagration with zest, indifferent to the sufferings of his people and only concerned when some of his own property perished in the flames. The origin of the fire was never discovered, but the opposing faction of boyars, anxious to undermine the power of the ruling party, spread the report that it was caused by witchcraft and the Glinskis. The rumour was rapidly adopted by the superstitious citizens, who whispered to each other with horror, not only that the Glinskis had stewed human hearts in blood, but that Princess Anna Glinski, the Tsar's aunt, had been seen driving round the city, sprinkling the streets with the magic brew, every drop of which burst into flame as it fell.

The credulous populace rose *en masse* against the supposed sorcerers, and murdered the Glinski family and their followers, without regard to either sex or age. Then, hearing that the Princess Anna and her son had taken refuge in the royal palace, they proceeded thither to demand the surrender of the witch. A coward at heart, the Tsar quailed at the sight of the infuriated mob. Instead of rising to the occasion and exercising his despotic power, he hid himself in the furthest recesses of his palace.

The situation was saved by Sylvester, an unknown priest from Novgorod, supposed to have been surreptitiously introduced into the palace by the prescient

Makarius. Appearing suddenly before the trembling monarch like a prophet of old, Sylvester sternly rebuked his vices, and, pointing to the national disasters as a sign of Divine wrath at his misdeeds, so worked upon Ivan's feelings, that he vowed repentance and reform on condition that the priest would rescue him from his present plight, and undertake to guide and counsel him in the future. Sylvester agreed, and by his vigorous personality retained his influence over his imperial master for nearly twelve years. During that time he not only entirely ruled the country, but, aided by a young man of obscure origin named Adashev, he effected several much needed reforms.

To aid them in their task, the Zemsky Sobor, or Territorial Council was formed, composed not only of the boyars, as had been previously the case, but including many of the most enlightened members of the democracy. An Ecclesiastical Council was also created, for the Church was as much in need of amendment as the State ; and by the exertions of these two bodies, the civil and ecclesiastical laws were revised and regulated. The *Subdenik*, or *Book of the Law*, embodies the civil code, while that of the Church is contained in the *Stoglav*, or *Book of the Hundred Chapters*, which gives a curious picture of the manners, superstitions and morals of the time. Sylvester also endeavoured to elevate national morality by his *Domostroi*, or *Rules for the Household*, in which he lays down maxims for the improvement of social and domestic life, and amongst other reforms, urges the abolition of slavery.

Both Sylvester and Adashev were statesmen of the first order, truly patriotic, and of great personal integrity. "Russia at this time," says Kourbski, the contemporary historian, "was beset by enemies, within and without. The lawlessness of the Tsar himself and of his favourites, turned the country into a desert and ruined the fatherland." But under the

guidance of the new ministers, the political prosperity and prestige which had been lost during the disorders of the Tsar's minority, were to a great extent recovered.

Realising the importance of maintaining constant connection with western civilisation, the two statesmen encouraged foreigners to settle in Russia, while they fostered European art and culture by every means in their power. Schools were established throughout the country, and a printing-press was set up at Moscow in 1553. On the death of the enlightened Metropolitan Makarius, however, in 1564, this press was destroyed in deference to public superstition. The printers fled to Poland, and the art of printing remained in abeyance, till revived in the reign of Michael Romanov.

In 1553, the accidental stranding on the shores of the White Sea of the *Bonaventura*, a British vessel commanded by Captain Richard Chancellor, opened up communication with England and led to much political and commercial intercourse between Muscovy and our island. A company of English merchants was formed, called "The Russian Company for Trading with Muscovy, Persia, and Northern Lands," whose charters, granted by Ivan IV, accorded them special privileges, including the monopoly of the import trade and permission to build factories at Vologda and Kolmogori. At first the advantages were all on the British side, but eventually the Russians realised the importance of the White Sea, and, in 1584, founded Archangel as a central depot for their northern trade.

Contemporary English writers—such as the Captain Chancellor already referred to, Anthony Johnson, the famous Asiatic explorer, and the two British ambassadors to Muscovy, Sir Jerome Bowes and Sir Jerome Horsey—give interesting and authentic accounts of the Russia of those days. Each speaks of the barbaric splendour of Ivan's court, of the brutality of its savage

monarch, and of the abject poverty, misery, and terror to which he had reduced his subjects.

During the era of Elizabeth, relations between the two sovereigns became somewhat strained, owing to our great queen's cold reception of the Tsar's advances, and refusal to join him in any alliance, either matrimonial or political. Towards the end of his reign, after the death of his seventh wife, Ivan applied for the hand of Elizabeth's cousin, Mary Hastings, but was curtly denied. No doubt the Lady Mary was deterred by the grim reports of her royal suitor's unamiable characteristics!

Amidst their domestic reforms, by means of constant warfare with the neighbouring states, Sylvester and Adashev found time during the twelve years of their administration to maintain and even to extend the Muscovite borders. Although he was too cowardly personally to command his armies in the field, Ivan had many brave and capable soldiers amongst his boyars, such as Adashev himself, Shtchenatyov, and Kourbski. Under their leadership the power of the khanates on the south-eastern borders was broken, and their domains were annexed. In this way Russia was freed of the Tartar marauders whose constant raids in search of slaves for the oriental markets had almost depopulated the land. Kazan was conquered in 1552, Astrakhan in 1555, and a large portion of the Baltic Provinces annexed in 1558, so that for a short time Russia possessed outlets on both the Caspian and Baltic Seas which were of great commercial value. To maintain his hold on the outlying provinces in south-eastern Europe, Sylvester organised a system of extensive colonisation, which compelled Russians to settle in the conquered districts. He thereby spread Christianity and extended Russian influence among the Mahommedan peoples who formed the original inhabitants.

But the brief season of Russia's peace was over, for Sylvester's domination was tottering to its fall.

In 1560, Ivan's good angel, Anastasia Romanov, died, and, deprived of her ennobling influence, he relapsed into those extremes of depravity and crime, from which his affection for his wife and his awe of Sylvester had hitherto restrained him. The boyars, jealous of the priest's ascendancy, seized the opportunity to undermine his influence. They accused him of having caused the Tsaritsa's death by sorcery, and prevailed on the superstitious Tsar to deprive him of office. In 1559, conscious of the growing estrangement between himself and his master, Sylvester had retired to a monastery; but he was now recalled, impeached, declared guilty of nefarious practices, and banished to the lonely cloister of Solovietsk, on the White Sea, where he died. Adashev, implicated with his coadjutor, was absent on a military expedition in Livonia, where, happily for him, he died of fever, thus escaping the unthinkable fate that would no doubt have been his had he lived to return home. The members of his less fortunate family, however, were all put to death. The Tsar wreaked on them the vengeance he had perforce to forego in the person of Adashev himself.

Freed from all restraining influences, Ivan IV now entered on those last phases of maniacal wickedness, which were soon to inspire the universal prayer, that "God would remove from the face of the earth and destroy this horrible monster and beast, this hellish fiend and ferocious tyrant."

His chief animosity was directed against the boyars, towards whom he nourished an inextinguishable hatred. In 1553, he had been dangerously ill, when the boyars, dreading a repetition of the anarchy in Ivan's own minority, refused to recognise his infant son as their ruler, and offered the succession to his

cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreivitch. Too loyal, however, to avail himself of the opportunity, Vladimir declined the honour and supported the claims of the infant prince. Ivan recovered, but he never forgave the boyars, and became convinced that Vladimir had designs against his person and throne. Though he masked his feelings, he but bided his time, and determined gradually to extirpate the nobles by every means his devilish ingenuity could devise. Many of these boyars were his own relatives, but he pursued them with the same relentless fury as he showed to the others. A list in his own handwriting, commends to the prayers of the Church the souls of some 3000 of these unfortunates and their dependents, whom he had ruthlessly massacred, regardless of age or sex, often for no worse crime than that they belonged to the hated aristocracy. Prince Vladimir Andreivitch and his family he treacherously invited to the palace as honoured guests, only to poison them with his own hand. Afterwards he caused the servants they had brought in their train to be stripped, flogged naked through the streets, and then shot.

Such few of the boyars as were not killed, were deprived of their estates, exiled and forbidden to marry. At least twenty principalities were arbitrarily annexed in this manner, while more than half the princely families of Russia became extinct, their very names blotted out and forgotten, except for the records of previous history. Some of the boyars managed to escape, and took refuge in Poland or Lithuania ; but the remaining nobles were heavily fined for such defection on the part of any one of their number.

Amongst these fugitives was the historian, Prince Andrei Kourbski, whose *History of the Reign of Ivan* gives so lurid, though doubtless true, a picture of that diabolical monarch. Descended from a race of warriors renowned for their courage and integrity, Kourbski

had once been Ivan's chief military leader and favourite. When the Tsar gave him the command of the expedition against Livonia in 1558, it was with the words, "Thee, my beloved, do I send in my stead," that he began his letter of instructions. Despite his long and loyal service, Kourbski was involved in the fall of Sylvester and Adashev; but, warned in time of the fate intended for him, he fled to Poland. Thence he wrote a letter to Ivan, denouncing his vices and his treatment of his people. The Tsar replied in an epistle sixty-eight pages long, full of specious excuses for himself and accusations against the boyars and the clergy as the cause of the national misrule. The curious correspondence which ensued, lasted many years and embraced many subjects. It is still preserved, and gives an insight into the Tsar's mind, which tends to confirm the theory of his insanity, at all events in his latter years.

According to tradition, Kourbski's denunciatory letter to the Tsar was delivered by the former's faithful servant, Vassili Shibanov. Ivan was so incensed at the contents, that he drove the iron-shod stick he always carried, through the henchman's foot, and, leaning heavily upon it as if in ignorance, kept it there while he read the letter. The man neither moved nor flinched, earning praise for his endurance even from the brutal monarch himself. Nevertheless, his courage did not avail to avert the Tsar's malice, for, in default of his master, Shibanov was tortured to death.

Kourbski's *History* abounds in details too horrible for repetition, and is one long series of indictments against the Tsar, for the crimes perpetrated during the last twenty-four years of his reign. The fate of women is usually unmentionable—none, not even nuns, were safe from the lust of this inhuman monster, and death alone released them from their tortures. Men were flayed alive, torn to pieces, roasted, boiled in oil, eaten by wild beasts, and made to drink molten lead.

Mothers looked on helpless at the dismemberment of their little ones, or saw their daughters hung up by the legs and hacked in two. Few of the victims knew for what misdeeds they suffered, and no protestations nor proofs of innocence were of the least avail.

In 1564, Ivan planned that *coup d'état* which was one of the most extraordinary acts of his abnormal reign. In spite of all his efforts, the Council of Boyars still existed. Jealous of its power, and of the exertions of the nobles and ecclesiastics to counterbalance his evil deeds, he determined once and for ever to rid himself of all restrictions. Suddenly, with his household and baggage, he left Moscow; the city learnt with amazement that the Tsar had fled, none knew wherefore, or whither. Deprived of their legal head, the affairs of state were at a standstill and all was chaos and confusion. At length, a few days later, a proclamation arrived from the missing Tsar, in which he announced that he had retired to Alexandrovo Sloboda, a village some miles from Moscow, and that, owing to the treachery and insubordination of the boyars and clergy—whom he accused of being "as regardless of the poor as of their sovereign"—he intended to abdicate in favour of the nation, which was henceforth to rule itself. The commons were thus dexterously inflamed against their lords, and a storm of indignation arose. The people feared the loss of their seeming champion and were loud in their demands for his recall, even offering to exterminate his enemies with their own hands, if he would but reconsider his decision. To save their lives from the popular resentment, the boyars joined in the general clamour, and a deputation, headed by the metropolitan, waited on the Tsar at Alexandrovo, to entreat him to re-enter his capital. After some show of reluctance, Ivan agreed to return, and to lay before the nation the conditions on which he would undertake to resume the throne.

By these he claimed the right to punish treason, to confiscate property, to banish or put to death whom he would. He also promulgated his famous New Order for the empire, by which he divided the kingdom politically into two halves. One, the Zemshtchina or national estate, was to be governed by the Council of Boyars, with the Kremlin as their headquarters ; the other, the Opritchnina or separate estate (consisting of certain towns and districts which were to be regarded as royal property), was to be ruled over by Ivan himself, with Alexandrovo as his capital. The arrangement was to last seven years, during which time there was to be no communication between the two estates. For the latter, his private kingdom, Ivan created from the dregs of society a new aristocracy and set of officials, and gave the Opritchnina its own court, its separate state departments, and its own laws. It was to be an empire in miniature, with all an empire's complex machinery, and Ivan as its sole and omnipotent head. His royal bodyguard, the Opritchniki, consisting of 6000 men, was formed from the worst of his accomplices, with the infamous Malyuta Skouratov at their head. They wore a distinctive uniform, and their emblem—a dog's head and a broom—was indicative of their treatment of the Tsar's enemies. Him they swore to love and protect at the cost of their own lives, to the detriment even of their own people. Unlimited power was given them to kill, rob, or torture any of the Zemshtchina people, so that a reign of terror began against the boyars and their dependents, to which all former persecutions were as nothing. Twelve thousand boyar families were destroyed or exiled, while to associate with, or to afford asylum to a member of the Zemshtchina was to court death.

Ivan's daily life at Alexandrovo was a curious mixture of the executioner and the monk. He divided his time between his torture-chamber and his church.

Services were held in the chapel from dawn to eve, at which the Tsar was invariably present, and where he prostrated himself with such fervour, that his forehead is said to have been a mass of bruises. At meal times, the imperial abbot of this mock community read aloud the Lives of the Saints to his boon companions, who, like himself, were all garbed in a monk's rough serge habit, worn over richly embroidered court costumes. The rest of the day was devoted to the torture-chamber. Here, again, the Tsar officiated in person, sitting in nominal judgment on sometimes as many as a hundred men, women, and children of the Zemshtchina boyar class, and gloating over their mental and physical anguish under the hideous tortures to which they were subjected. This business over, the Tsar attended Evensong, and then retired, to prepare himself for the debaucheries with which the day invariably concluded.

No one seems to have remonstrated at these atrocities; the clergy and the successive metropolitans of Moscow were too sycophantic, or cowed by terror. Only the saintly Metropolitan Philip was bold enough to denounce the Tsar's enormities, for which temerity he was deposed in 1566, and strangled by Malyuta Skouratov.

At the end of five years, the Opritchniki had practically exterminated the aristocracy, and the Tsar was forced to seek his prey elsewhere. In 1570, he bethought him of the refractory cities of Tver, Novgorod, and Pskov; and whereas previously the boyars alone had been the objects of his animosity, now whole towns were to be sacrificed to satisfy his lust for blood. Even the clergy, who had been immune till then, owing to the Tsar's superstitious awe of the Church, were involved in the general massacre.

Novgorod, as Moscow's ancient rival, was the chief object of the expedition, but Tver was devastated *en route*, her citizens tortured and slain, her ecclesi-

astics flogged to death, her monasteries and churches razed to the ground. Novgorod fared even worse. For five days her streets ran with blood, the number of victims being estimated at 6000, and even 60,000. The archbishop was sewn in a bearskin and flung to the dogs, and whole batches of the inhabitants were roasted to death over slow fires in the market-place.

The city of Pskov, having tasted the bitterness of death in anticipation, was spared, only a heavy fine being inflicted, with the banishment of her chief citizens.

Meanwhile, rival states watched the disunion and gradual depopulation of Muscovy with interest. The opportunity for an invasion of the distracted country seemed good, for the boyars, from whose ranks Russia's best and bravest generals had been drawn, had almost all perished, so that there was none to lead her armies in the field, or defend her hearths from the invader.

Lithuania and Sweden therefore, both smarting under the aggressions of previous years, made war to recover their lost possessions—an example quickly followed by the Khan of the Crimea, and by Sigismund II of Poland.

In 1571, the Crimme Tartars penetrated Russia as far as Moscow, which, defended only by the remnant of the Zemshtchina, was soon captured and set on fire. As the city was built almost entirely of wood, it was burnt to the ground ; only the Kremlin was left intact, while 80,000 of the inhabitants are said to have perished in the flames. Having thus beaten Ivan at his own game of destruction, the Khan returned to the Crimea, ravaging the country as he went, and driving the natives before him into slavery. Thus, when fresh from the devastation of Novgorod and Tver, the Tsar re-entered Moscow at the end of 1571, he found his once prosperous capital a deserted heap of smoking ruins ; and of the four foremost Russian cities, Pskov alone remained comparatively untouched.

The rest of the reign of Ivan IV was a period of continual and unsuccessful warfare : it seemed, indeed, as if, in Divine retribution for his evil deeds, misfortune pursued him at every turn. His own bloodthirstiness had robbed him of his generals and weakened his military strength at a time when both were needed against Stepan Bathory, the electoral king of Poland and one of the greatest captains of his age.

Sigismund II died in 1572, whereupon the Poles invited Ivan's son, amongst other candidates, to stand for election to the vacant throne. Ivan, however, disliking the idea of his son's advancement, refused the request, but offered himself instead, a proposal hastily declined by the Poles, to whom, in view of his treatment of his own people, the prospect of such a monarch was far from pleasing. Stepan Bathory, lord of Transylvania, was elected, and a long and costly war with the slighted majesty of Muscovy was the result.

By 1580, Bathory had reconquered Livonia, entered Russia and besieged Pskov ; and seeing the war thus carried into the heart of his own country, Ivan had no choice but to sue for peace. The intervention of Pope Gregory XIII was asked and readily granted. But the Papal envoy, the Jesuit Possevin, who came to Moscow to mediate between the two monarchs, naturally had the interests of Rome most at heart, and favoured Poland as a Roman Catholic country.

By the treaty of Zapoli, in 1582, a truce for ten years was concluded, by which Ivan was compelled to cede Livonia, Polotsk, and all his conquests in the Baltic Provinces to Poland, thus losing his hold on the Baltic seaboard, which had been gained with such difficulty at the beginning of his reign.

In the same year, peace was signed with Sweden at Ilyusa, but with the loss to Muscovy of the fertile province of Ingria.

Though thus unfortunate in the north-west, Ivan, through the medium of Yermak, a Don Cossack, had acquired vast territories in the east, whereby Siberia and the whole region watered by the Volga had been placed under his control.

The Cossacks were a race of wild, hardy freebooters, who, in the fourteenth century, had settled in the Ukraine, or country bordered by the Dnieper, and were descended from the early Slavs of Little Russia by intermarriage with the Golden Horde of Ghenghiz Khan. Famed as much for their bravery as for their ferocity, they gradually formed themselves into a free and independent republic, which became not only the natural refuge of every outlaw in Eastern Europe, but a stalwart defence against the Tartar hordes who would otherwise have overrun the West. They further created the famous Zaporogian Setcha, or Republic, beyond the Cataracts of the Dnieper—a kind of military brotherhood, whose ostensible aim was the suppression of the Mahommedan faith, as opposed to their own Christianity of the Greek Church, but whose real object was the maintenance of their own lands and organisation, and the increase of their own wealth by force of arms.

From this brotherhood the Don Cossacks had separated themselves early in the sixteenth century, when they had founded new settlements in the fertile steppes watered by the Don. Unlike their brethren of the Ukraine republic, these Don Cossacks acknowledged the supremacy of the Tsar of Muscovy; and as long as there was no interference with their independence and customs, they proved themselves loyal adherents to the Russian empire and some of its best and bravest soldiers. Carrying on the traditions of their race, they maintained the borders of Muscovy against the inroads of the various Tartar tribes from north-western Asia; and although they satisfied their

piratical instincts by predatory raids on passing merchants, they were, as a rule, careful only to wage war on such as refused to recognise the sovereignty of Russia.

In 1576, Yermak, their ataman or headman, by his robberies and murders, had overstepped the limits of even Cossack lawlessness. A price had been set upon his head, and he and his companions, fleeing from the troops sent to apprehend them, had crossed the Ural Mountains and taken refuge in Siberia.

The wealth and fertility of Siberia were vaguely known to Russians through the commercial enterprise of the Stroganovs, a family of merchant-princes from Novgorod, who, in 1558, obtained permission from the Tsar to form settlements on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains, and to develop the salt, copper, and silver mines that there abounded. Six years earlier, moreover, after the conquest of Kazan, Ediger, the Khan of Sibir (fearing a similar fate for his own territories as that which had befallen his neighbour's), had tendered his submission to Ivan IV, and Siberia became nominally a tributary state of the Muscovite empire.

In 1563, however, Ediger was deposed and slain by Koutchoum, a rival khan, who ignored the claims of Muscovy and ruled as an independent Tsar of Siberia for several years. Matters remained thus in abeyance, till Koutchoum, alarmed at the gradual encroachments of the Stroganov settlements, attacked the colonists and raided several of their towns. At this opportune juncture, Yermak and his fellow-fugitives reached the Russian colony, and reinforcing the Stroganovs, helped to repel the invaders, whom they afterwards pursued into the heart of their own country.

It was a wild enterprise for such a handful of men, but their choice was limited. Behind them lay a felon's death at the hands of Ivan the Terrible; before them stretched the path to possible freedom, wealth,

and honour, with death—if it came—at least the death of a hero, sword in hand, on the field of battle.

Braving the dangers of the climate, the unknown country and the harassing attacks of their fierce and numerous foes, they succeeded after many months of incredible hardship and difficulty in reaching Isker, the Siberian capital, which they captured, after a long and desperate fight, on 23rd October 1581. The Tsar Koutchoum and his followers fled, Isker was evacuated and Siberia lay at the feet of the Cossack adventurers.

At the earliest possible opportunity, Yermak sent news of his triumph to Ivan IV, and tendered him the sovereignty of the empire of Siberia, in return for which "national service" the Tsar was graciously pleased to grant him and his followers a free pardon for their past offences, and to confer on Yermak the title of Prince of Siberia. For the next two years the great Cossack captain continued to rule Siberia on Ivan's behalf; but reinforcements from Russia were infrequent, and heavily outnumbered as he always was, it was difficult to retain his hold on the country and to maintain order amongst the numerous Tartar tribes who surrounded him. Constant revolts occurred, instigated by the deposed khan Koutchoum, and, in 1584, in the course of a punitive expedition against one of these refractory tribes, Yermak was drowned while crossing a flooded river. Deprived of their leader, the Cossacks would have evacuated Isker and renounced their conquests, but strong reinforcements from Russia strengthened their hands, and eventually Siberia was firmly united to the Muscovite empire.

Ivan IV died the same year, and was buried at Moscow. In 1582, he had slain his eldest and favourite son, Ivan, by striking him with his iron-spiked staff, in a sudden fit of passion, and remorse, acting on a mind and body already weakened by disease and

excess, had hastened his end. Clever and farseeing, he promoted Russian intercourse with Western Europe, broke the power of the Mongols, and greatly enlarged his eastern borders; but he retarded the internal development of his country by his own savagery, and created a class hatred and a state of moral and political anarchy, which future reforms never wholly eradicated.

Ivan's reign of terror was over, but the calamities, or Period of Trouble, as it is called, engendered by that era, had but just begun.

CHAPTER IV

USURPERS, IMPOSTORS, AND GREAT TRIBULATIONS

1584–1613

Feodor, the sickly, feeble-minded second son of Ivan IV, who now succeeded, was, as his father contemptuously remarked, "more like a sacristan than a Tsarevitch," and infinitely preferred the church services and peaceful life of the cloister, to the perilous glory of the throne. He was glad, therefore, to resign the reins of government to his maternal uncle, Nikita Romanov, an astute and able politician, who soon acquired supreme power as the virtual ruler of Muscovy.

In 1591, Romanov was ousted from the regency by Boris Godounov, Feodor's brother-in-law, who, through the influence of his sister, the Tsaritsa Irene, had gradually gained complete ascendancy over the mind of the weakly Tsar.

Descended from a Tartar chief who had embraced Christianity and settled at Moscow, this Godounov was one of Ivan IV's Opritchnina nobles, and had married the daughter of the execrable Malyuta Skouratov, thus securing a position at court which was further strengthened by his sister's marriage to Prince Feodor. As he does not seem to have participated in the crimes of his companions, it says much for his ability and powers of diplomacy that he should have continued to enjoy the late Tsar's confidence and favour. He is said to have been present at the altercation between Ivan and his eldest son, and in the

endeavour to save the latter from the blow which killed him, was himself severely wounded and narrowly escaped death. But Ivan IV did not withdraw his patronage, and recognising Godounov's talents, he named him in his will as one of the four men appointed to assist his son Feodor with their counsels.

A born statesman and a clever, capable minister, Godounov soon gave proof of his powers ; and under his administration the land had peace for fourteen years. Unjust taxes were remitted, political prisoners were released, the laws were regulated and enforced, and many reforms were inaugurated, designed to recover the country from the disorders and misery of the last reign. In 1591, a raid by the Khan of the Crimea was successfully repulsed, and after the great fire in Moscow during the same year, Boris repaired the devastated districts at his own expense, under greatly improved conditions.

Boundless personal ambition, however, was the keynote of Godounov's character, and he aimed high, never losing sight of his goal, leaving no stone unturned to accomplish his object, and no more scrupulous in his methods than the majority of his contemporaries. He coveted nothing less than the throne for himself and his descendants ; but between him and his aspirations stood the feeble Feodor (whose only child had died in infancy) and the youngest son of Ivan IV, the Tsarevitch Dmitri, then about eight years old.

This boy and his mother were sent to Uglitch, a small village about fifty miles north of Moscow, and, in 1591, news came of his sudden death, as the result of an accident during a severe epileptic fit. Such at least was the story assiduously spread by Godounov ; and although the Tsar, who sincerely mourned his little half-brother, ordered an inquiry to be made into the circumstances of his decease, the verdict was a

foregone conclusion. The affair was hushed up ; some few members of the Godounov faction were loaded with benefits, as if in reward for services rendered, whilst the Dowager-Tsaritsa was immured in a convent that she might tell no tales, and the attendants of the Tsarevitch, with such of the inhabitants of Uglitch as asked inconvenient questions, were murdered, or banished the realm.

Godounov then set himself to obtain the support of the boyars and commons by political measures framed to conciliate both. He pleased the clergy by persuading the head of the Greek Church—the Patriarch of Constantinople—to create a Patriarch of Moscow, who thus became the nominal head of the Russian Church ; and he propitiated the boyars by issuing an " ukase," or imperial decree in 1597, forbidding the peasants to move from one estate to another, as had been previously permitted. Once a year, if discontented with their master or conditions, the peasants had been at liberty to take service elsewhere. Now they were tied to the land ; many hitherto free persons became little better than slaves, and serfdom was established for the next 300 years. By this decree, the nobles could pursue and bring back such fugitives as attempted to escape from bondage, so that the difficulty of the small landowner in obtaining agricultural labour was sensibly decreased. The common people, however, naturally resented this enforced slavery. Many serfs took refuge with the Don Cossacks, and greatly increased the strength and turbulency of that already lawless community.

In 1598 Feodor died ; the line of Rurik was extinct, and the way to the throne of All the Russias lay open to Boris Godounov.

Too astute to unmask his ambitions by at once proclaiming himself Tsar, Boris, in common with the other boyars, tendered his allegiance to his sister, the

Tsaritsa Irene, in accordance with the Slavonic law of succession. She stipulated that Boris should remain at the head of affairs to govern on her behalf, and then retired to a cloister, her example being soon afterwards followed by her brother, who professed himself unable to undertake the regency, until the will of the people had been ascertained.

During his retirement, the clergy—always his ardent supporters—and the Patriarch Job of Moscow, who was in his pay, worked hard in his interests, and a deputation headed by the latter waited on him in his retreat, to entreat his acceptance of the crown. Three times did Boris refuse, hypocritically protesting his unworthiness of so great an honour. In reality, he waited for the demand to come from the boyars and commons, many of whom he knew to be averse to his elevation—the boyars, on account of his own and his wife's upstart origin, and the people, because of their enslavement by the unfortunate ukase of 1597. Eventually a national council was convoked, and at its request Boris agreed to accept the title of Tsar.

He had attained his ends, but the fruits of his success turned to ashes in his mouth. Like Macbeth, he was haunted by remorse for the crime by which he had achieved his object. Fear turned him into a despot almost as tyrannical as his predecessors ; he organised an elaborate system of espionage, and no man's life was safe from suspicion of treason.

At first he made a wise and beneficent ruler ; for some years, before the canker of mistrust had begun to eat into his soul, he did his utmost to improve the condition of his people and to inspire their confidence.

Boris' foreign relations, especially with England and Holland, were singularly auspicious. He maintained his borders against the encroachments of Poland and Sweden, consolidated his eastern possessions, and increased Russian intercourse with western civilisation.

From 1601 onwards, a dreadful famine devastated Russia for three years, during which time thousands of the people perished, so that whole districts became utterly depopulated. So terrible was the suffering, that cannibalism became almost common. It was even said that mothers devoured their own children. The Tsar strove hard to mitigate the distress of his subjects, but the superstition of the time saw the visitation of God in so great a calamity. Men whispered that it was the Divine retribution for the murder of the rightful heir by the usurper. Torture and death requited such treasonable talk, but the rumour grew ; and the heart of Boris Godounov waxed bitter within him. The boyars, especially the Romanovs, who helped to spread the report, were treated with severity. Feodor Romanov, the head of the family, was compelled to become a monk, under the name of Philaret, whilst his wife, Marfa, was forced to enter a convent.

The national discontent increased, till at last, in the summer of 1604, news reached Moscow that the young prince Dmitri was not dead after all, but very much alive, and, supported by the Polish king and nobles, was coming at the head of a large Polish army to recover his kingdom.

Who this pretender really was, has never transpired. Many historians hold him to have been Grishka Otrepiev, an apostate monk who had taken refuge with the Don Cossacks ; others, disregarding the theory of "Ljedmitri," or "the false Dmitri," consider him as truly the son of Ivan IV, saved from death by the devotion of his servants.

According to Dmitri's own story, his guardian, Bogdan Byelski, suspecting treachery, had secretly conveyed him to a monastery and substituted another child in his stead at Uglitch, who had been duly murdered. The Tsarevitch had remained at the monas-

tery for some years, until, fearing detection, he had escaped to Lithuania, and eventually entered the service of Prince Adam Wisniowiecki, a great Polish noble. Here the secret of his birth was discovered. He was confronted and recognised by various persons claiming to have seen him as a child, after which his story was accepted by the Wisniowiecki family, who were also impressed by the obvious superiority of his bearing and address. The supposed Dmitri was taken to Cracow, there to plead his cause in person before King Sigismund III, who, after some investigations—being doubtless not unwilling to embarrass his natural enemy, the Tsar of Muscovy—declared himself convinced of the justice of his claim. Owing to recent treaties with Russia, Sigismund was unable to support the pretender openly ; but he equipped him in a manner becoming his ostensible rank, encouraged the Polish nobles to take service under his banner, and granted him an annual allowance of 40,000 florins, as well as some of the Polish revenues for the maintenance of his army.

Another asset in Dmitri's favour was the support of the Jesuits, who saw in him an instrument ready to their hand for the conversion of heretic Russia and for the healing of the age-long schism between the Churches of the East and West. Abjuring the Greek faith, Dmitri was hastily admitted into the fold of Rome. Henceforth his cause was the cause of the Papal See, and correspondingly dear to the heart of Pope Clement VIII and his agent, the nuncio Rangoni.

In return for the support of Poland and Rome, the pretender engaged, as soon as he became Tsar, to cede Smolensk and Seversk to the Polish crown ; to promote the union between Poland and Muscovy ; to assist Sigismund in his claims to the throne of Sweden ; to build Roman Catholic churches in Russia, and to admit the Jesuits into the country.

Ljedmitri was betrothed to Marina Mniszek, the daughter of Yuri Mniszek, the lord of Sandomir, a member of the Wisniowiecki family. The marriage was to take place immediately after Dmitri's coronation, and probably feeling that a hundred promises would be as easy to fulfil as one, the pretender undertook to give his bride the towns of Novgorod and Pskov as her marriage portion, to create her father governor of the future Polish provinces of Smolensk and Seversk, and richly to reward the Wisniowiecki and Mniszek families for their assistance.

At last, after many delays and no little friction between the rival Polish magnates, the pretender's military preparations were complete. At the head of a large body of Polish and Russian troops, including 2000 Zaporogian Cossacks, he crossed the frontier in August 1604, and marched on Kiev. He was enthusiastically received, and thence proceeded slowly north, capturing Tchernigov and numerous other towns of importance as he went, and everywhere acclaimed as Dmitri Ivanovitch, the descendant of the ancient dynasty of Rurik, and the rightful Tsar of Russia.

The first check to this triumphal progress occurred near Novgorod Seversk, where he was defeated by the great commander Basmanov, with whom was the famous French mercenary captain Margeret, whose vivid contemporary account renders him a valuable authority on this and succeeding incidents in the life of Ljedmitri. But the accession of a large body of Don Cossacks to the pretender's forces about this time, nullified this reverse and compensated for the defection of the Polish contingent, many of whom, disheartened by the defeat, deserted and returned home.

In January 1605, he was again defeated at Dobrinichi near Orel, by Prince Shiuski, and having lost nearly

all his infantry and baggage, Dmitri was compelled to withdraw to Putivl, where he remained till the spring.

In the interval, on 13th April 1605, the Tsar Boris suddenly died, in the fifty-second year of his age and the seventh of his reign. All his efforts to crush the pretender by force of arms, intrigue, and assassination having proved in vain, he made up his mind that the hand of God was against him, and sank into a state of melancholy from which nothing could rouse him. He was a short, stout man, much afflicted with the gout, and probably died of apoplexy; but a demise so sudden and opportune gave rise to the theory that he had been poisoned by the agents of Dmitri.

Boris was succeeded by his son Feodor, a youth of sixteen, of singular intelligence and promise, who had been carefully trained for his high position and would doubtless have made a good ruler. Providence, however, decreed otherwise; popular feeling was opposed to the usurpers, and Dmitri's star was in the ascendant. On the death of Boris, the princes Shiuski and Mstislavski, with many of the leading boyars and the two commanders, Basmanov and Margeret, went over to the pretender; and the army having thus declared for Dmitri, the fate of the Godounovs was sealed. The inhabitants of Moscow rose in a body, murdered the young Tsar and his mother, and imprisoned his sister Xenia in a convent, from which, however, she seems to have been released during the reign of Michael Romanov.

All Moscow then clamoured for the pretender, and in June 1605, amid the acclamations of the people, he entered his capital in triumph. The mother of the murdered Tsarevitch was fetched from her nunnery, and in the presence of the delighted populace, immediately recognised her son in the person of the supposed Dmitri. They "embraced and wept on each other's neck," but, as after his fall she repudiated the relation-

ship with equal alacrity, it is to be presumed that she welcomed any opportunity of escape from the tedium of her convent prison.

In defiance of tradition, the new Tsar was crowned in July, thereby greatly offending his subjects, who would have preferred the ceremony to have taken place in September, the beginning of the Russian year, in accordance with ancient custom.

The ill-omened Shiuski family, ever ready to stir up strife against the throne, seized the opportunity to spread disaffection among the people, and circulated the report that the Tsar, himself a heretic, was but a tool in the hands of Poland and the Pope, and, as such, was bent on the suppression of Russian usages and the substitution of the Latin heresy for the Orthodox faith.

Prince Vassili Shiuski, the head of this conspiracy, was tried for treason and condemned to death, but was pardoned on the scaffold by the Tsar, who had sworn not to shed the blood of any one of his subjects. By this clement act, Dmitri sealed his own doom ; for Vassili Shiuski lived to requite his benefactor's magnanimity with yet further treachery and with murder.

Dmitri now set himself to win the approval of his subjects by the inauguration of many reforms calculated to ameliorate the lot of the unhappy serfs and to lessen the national burden of taxation. He further granted a free pardon to all the enemies of the late Tsar, recalled the Romanovs and other boyars from banishment, and nominated Philaret Romanov to be Metropolitan of Rostov.

But in spite of his good intentions and of his natural charm of manner, the pretender alienated the popular affections by his total disregard of Russian prejudices and his undisguised preference for western customs. He openly laughed at the costume, illiteracy, and barbarity of the people, filled his bodyguard with

foreign mercenaries, and by his want of sympathy with Muscovite aims and ideals, himself fostered the growing suspicion in the minds of his disillusioned subjects that his Polish predilections were proofs of the Polish blood in the veins of the ex-monk Grishka Otrepiev. A sceptic at heart, he scoffed at ecclesiastical superstitions, while he scandalised Jesuits and Russians alike by his neglect of holy feasts and fasts, and by his contempt for the ikons and sacred relics of the Church.

The advent of his bride, Marina Mniszek, in May 1606, with a crowd of overbearing Polish nobles in her train, filled Moscow to overflowing with the hated heretics, and still further increased the general dissatisfaction. The court and city swarmed with aliens. Neither the splendour of the feasts and pageants organised in honour of the wedding, nor the liberal *largesse* scattered amongst the crowd, could compensate Russians for the fact that their Tsar preferred a foreign wife and foreign ways to the maidens and customs of his own country. Like the mutter of distant thunder, the murmurs of the people grew daily louder, and the general discontent—sedulously fostered by Vassili Shiuski—became more and more acute, till at last the storm broke and the romance of the false Dmitri was ended for ever.

At midnight on 20th May, only eleven days after the pretender's wedding, the Moscow mob, headed by Shiuski and other boyars of his faction, broke into the palace, overcame the guard, and slew every Pole at sight, including Peter Basmanov, then in command of the foreign mercenaries.

The unfortunate Dmitri, finding himself surrounded by his enemies, attempted to escape by leaping from a window at the top of his palace, but broke his leg and severely injured himself otherwise in the fall. As he lay helpless on the ground, he was hacked to pieces by his murderers, and his mutilated body was

afterwards exposed to the public gaze for three days in the market-place. The corpse was then buried, but, " to prevent the charms of that dead enchanter," it was later disinterred, burnt outside the city, and the ashes scattered to the winds. Twelve hundred Poles are said to have perished in Moscow upon that fatal night. The life of Marina Mniszek was spared however, and she was merely imprisoned, but escaped to lead a chequered life of adventure and romance, until her final incarceration in a convent.

Margeret, the mercenary captain, also escaped with his life, but declined to take service under the murderers of his late master, to whom he seems to have been sincerely attached. He therefore returned to France, where he wrote a detailed account of the pretender's career for Henry of Navarre. In it he declared his conviction that Dmitri " was in very truth the son of Ivan Vassilievitch the Tormentor," and scouts the notion that he was Grishka Otrepiev the monk, maintaining that he saw the latter with his own eyes at Moscow, where he was publicly produced by the Tsar Dmitri himself, in refutation of the popular theory.

Since there was no legal successor to the throne, Vassili Shiuski managed to get himself elected, and assumed the title of Tsar. But he was disliked by the commons for his servility to their order, and hated by the boyars for his ambition and overweening arrogance.

The country was rent by rival factions, and the king of Poland, anxious to revenge the death of his subjects in the recent disturbances, took advantage of the general anarchy to invade Russia and besiege Smolensk.

Pretender after pretender appeared, each claiming to be the real Dmitri Ivanovitch, whilst a rising of the Don Cossacks broke out in the name of the " Tsar Peter," a youth who feigned to be the son of the Tsar

Feodor and his wife Irene. He declared that he had been kidnapped in infancy by Boris Godounov, and a little girl (who subsequently died) substituted in his place. But his pretensions were too chimerical to obtain belief even among the credulous Russians, and the rebels were soon dispersed.

The Cossacks then supported the claim of a second Ljedmitri, in the person of "the Brigand of Touchina" as he was called, from the village a few miles from Moscow, where he established his camp. He was joined by a large number of Tartar and other marauders, and even by Marina Mniszek, who, rather than return to Poland as an ignominious fugitive, pretended to recognise her late husband in his impersonator, and cast in her lot with his. This impostor defeated the armies of Shiuski at Volkhov, in 1608, and even besieged Moscow; but his cause gradually declined and he retired to Astrakhan, where he was eventually murdered by one of his own followers.

Meanwhile the Poles had advanced further into Russia. In September 1609, they had defeated Shiuski at Klushina, a village to the north-west of Moscow, and they then threatened the capital itself. Shiuski was convicted of incompetence and compelled to abdicate. He retired to a monastery, but was later handed over to the Poles, who sent him as a prisoner to Warsaw, where he died.

The Council of Boyars, under Ivan Nikititch, a Romanov, next attempted to cope with the disorders of their distracted country, and, as the only solution of their difficulties, offered the crown to Ladislaus, son of Sigismund III of Poland, by whom it was accepted. Zolkiewski, the Polish commander-in-chief, was then invited to take possession of Moscow in his master's name. But it soon became apparent that Sigismund, who was a bigoted Roman Catholic, was using his son for his own ends, and that he meant by

seizing the throne for himself, to unite the kingdoms of Poland and Muscovy in his own person, and to replace the Greek faith in Russia by that of the Latin Church.

Alarmed at this prospect, the people once more rose in defence of their beliefs; and the Poles, and the pro-Polish boyars who had introduced the heretics within the walls of the capital, were forced to take refuge in the Kremlin, where they were closely besieged by the enraged populace.

The condition of Russia was then most pitiable. Within the Kremlin the Polish adherents kept the citizens at bay; without the city walls the army of the false Dmitri and other marauder bands ravaged the country round for miles; Sigismund of Poland was advancing rapidly to his countrymen's assistance; in the north the Swedes had attacked Novgorod; in the south and east Tartar tribes had risen in revolt; at Pskov, a third pretender, another false Dmitri, had been acknowledged as Tsar. "This period of terror," says a writer of the time, "can only be called The Great Tribulation, for the misery of the Russian people was as it had never been since the day of creation."

Alone amongst their contemporaries, Hermogenes, the then Patriarch of Moscow, and Lyapounov, a boyar of Ryazan, endeavoured to stem the flood of anarchy, and to check the disintegration of their unhappy country. They summoned the nation "to unite and drive out the enemy from Moscow, the heart of our country; to uphold the Orthodox faith, or to die one and all in the attempt. If the King of Poland consents to have his son baptised into the true faith and agrees to his becoming our Tsar, and if he will withdraw all the Lithuanian troops from Russia and his armies from Smolensk, then will we swear fealty to the Tsar Vladislav (Ladislaus) Sigismondovitch, and be his faithful servants. But if King Sigismund refuses these our conditions, then let us stand up and

defend the true faith and fight for the Russian lands."

The appeal stirred the heart of the people, and Lyapounov soon found himself at the head of a national army, marching to purge Moscow from her Polish oppressors. For four months he besieged the capital, but in a rash moment he solicited the assistance of Zarouski, a Cossack chief, who ended by resenting the strict discipline to which he and his men were subjected, rose in revolt, and murdered the commander-in-chief.

Deprived of their leader, the nationalists became demoralised and gradually dispersed. Only a few of the more patriotic remained to continue the siege under the command of Prince Trubetzkoi and to maintain a guerilla warfare against the Poles.

Nationalism, however, was not wholly extinct. Again the Patriarch Hermogenes lifted up his voice in exhortation to the people to save their nation and religion from the destruction which threatened to overwhelm them. For this act of bravery he was imprisoned and starved to death ; but his self-devotion saved Russia, for, in response to his appeal, a wave of patriotism swept over the country.

A league of cities was formed, whose citizens sacrificed their all in the national cause ; and under Prince Dmitri Pojarski, a small country squire, and Kosma Minin, a butcher of Nijni-Novgorod, the standard of liberty was raised at Yaroslav, in August 1612.

Once more a national army rallied to the relief of the capital, and joined the now depleted forces of Prince Trubetzkoi before the walls of Moscow. The Polish garrison maintained an obstinate and heroic defence, refusing to surrender till all hopes of reinforcements had failed and starvation had reduced them to eating the bodies of the slain. At last, on 25th October, the gates of the Kremlin opened. With the Poles,

came forth a body of emaciated Russian boyars who had been instrumental in introducing the Polish element into the country ; but, in spite of the popular antagonism to them as the cause of the national tribulations, their lives were spared, through the clemency of the patriot leaders.

The capture of Moscow and the ejection of the Poles, had, for the time being, freed Russia from her foreign foes. But her internal condition was still chaotic ; there was no ruler, no fixed form of government, and commerce was at a standstill. The patriots Pojarski and Minin, and a priest named Palitsin, formed a provisional council ; but it was felt that in the election of a national Tsar lay the only hope of salvation from the Polish yoke and of re-establishing Russia as an independent nation.

At a national assembly convoked in February 1613, the crown was offered successively to the princes Pojarski and Mstislavski, but refused. Finally, Michael, the young son of the Metropolitan Philaret Romanov was selected, with whom commenced the dynasty which was to rule Russia for the next three centuries.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY ROMANOVS

1613–1689

With the commencement of a new dynasty, strenuous efforts were made to limit the imperial power and to prevent a recurrence of the autocratic despotism from which the nation had previously suffered. The Tsar, as appointed by the people, was to be assisted in the government by their representative assemblies, the Zemsky Sobor and the Council of Boyars; and his actions were to be more or less restricted by their wishes. Autocracy was to be replaced by a limited monarchy, and the will of the sovereign was to give way to that of the State.

With these objects in view, the new Tsar was essentially the nation's choice, and his election was popular with all parties. The boyars and clergy counted on his youth and inexperience, as well as on his family connections, to raise themselves to wealth and power, while the people regarded him as the instrument of their deliverance from the Polish yoke and as the outward expression of the popular will by the unanimous vote of the National Council.

The Romanov family, though undistinguished, was old. Its members possessed a charm of manner, which, although it often concealed a lack of more permanent qualities, rendered them universally popular. Michael Romanov seems to have been an attractive youth, but he was intellectually feeble, incompetent,

and utterly unfit to cope with the political and domestic difficulties which surrounded him. Intrigues and factions began at once between the rival boyars, each scheming for his own aggrandisement. The country was depopulated and impoverished and enemies threatened the safety of the empire on every side. A statesman of tact and experience was sorely needed; but Philaret Romanov, the one man fitted for the task, was a prisoner in Poland, whither he had been sent in 1610, to offer the crown to Ladislaus, and where he was detained as a hostage. Thus deprived of his natural adviser, the young Tsar fell into the hands of his mother's relatives, the Saltykovs, who assumed the conduct of affairs and became the virtual rulers of Muscovy.

The wars with Sweden and Poland continued. Both nations refused to acknowledge Michael as Tsar, while Poland still retained possession of Smolensk and other districts, and declined to renounce the claims of Ladislaus to the Russian throne.

The Cossacks, moreover, were an ever-present trouble; those of the Dnieper openly acknowledged the supremacy of Poland, while those of the Don, although nominally subject to Muscovy, still ravaged the country under their chief Zarouski, and attempted to set up an independent government in Astrakhan.

On the death of the second Ljedmitri, the ubiquitous Marina Mniszek had fled with their infant son Ivan and placed herself under the protection of Zarouski, who claimed the throne on behalf of her child, and at the head of a large army made war on Russia. He captured several towns, but was ultimately defeated in 1614, and being taken prisoner, he was impaled and his forces were dispersed. Marina was relegated to a nunnery, and the infant Ivan, aged three, was hanged, so that the race of the pretended descendants of Ivan IV was effectually exterminated.

A desultory war with the Swedes, under Gustavus Adolphus, dragged on for the next four years ; but, through the intervention of England and Holland, which were anxious to resume their trade with the two belligerents, peace was signed at Stolbova, near Lake Ladoga, in 1617. By this treaty, which deprived her of all hopes of a Baltic seaboard, Russia agreed to pay a large indemnity, to renounce her rights in Livonia, and to surrender Karelia and Ingria. In return for these concessions, Sweden was to acknowledge Michael as Tsar, and to restore Novgorod and other conquests in Russia.

Muscovy was at last free to turn her whole attention to the struggle with Poland, and to devote her energies to checking the advance of Ladislaus, who had invaded Russia and threatened to attack the capital. Finally, in 1618, at Deulino, near Moscow, a truce of fourteen years was agreed upon, and an exchange of prisoners was arranged, which enabled Philaret Romanov to regain his freedom. The war was renewed in 1632, but Sigismund III was dead, Poland was at war with Sweden, and, in 1634, Ladislaus was glad to conclude a final peace, by which he kept possession of Smolensk and Tchernigov, but renounced all claims to the Tsardom of Muscovy for himself and his heirs.

Philaret Romanov returned to Russia in June 1619, deprived the Saltykovs of office and immediately assumed the government of the realm himself. Acting as co-Tsar with his son, he was further nominated to the Patriarchate of Moscow, vacant since the death of Hermogenes in 1612. He thus combined in his own person the supreme power in both Church and State. It must be confessed, however, that he was pre-eminently fitted for the lofty position he had arrogated to himself. In spite of his ambition, his mental attainments and his natural abilities as a statesman, fully qualified him to undertake the guidance of his country

at a most difficult stage in her career. The tribulations and misrule of past years had checked Russian development in every way; all progress was at a standstill, and drastic reforms were urgently needed in every corner of the state, which the capable Philaret alone could undertake.

Under his administration the taxes were readjusted, trade and industrial enterprise were promoted, and foreign merchants were attracted to the capital and encouraged to settle there.

Himself a cultivated man, Philaret set himself to combat the gross ignorance and superstition which prevailed in every class of Russian society, for the mass of the people was wholly illiterate, while few, even amongst the boyars, could read or write. Now, foreign teachers and scientists established schools in Moscow, the famous Patriarchal Library was founded, the art of printing was revived, and western civilisation once more began to flourish. The western luxuries of snuff and tobacco alone were discouraged; smoking was regarded as a criminal offence, while the man caught taking a pinch of snuff, had his nose cut off as a punishment.

Gunpowder and firearms had been introduced into Russia during the reign of Ivan III, and, encouraged by Philaret, manufactories for both were established at Moscow, together with a foundry for casting metals, under the direction of Johann Valk, a native of Nuremberg.

The power of the boyars was curtailed in many ways, and the Streltsi or musketeers, who constituted the standing army of Russia, were reorganised on western lines, while their command was entrusted to experienced officers of known military talent, instead of given to the boyars, who had always considered the army as their hereditary and exclusive province.

A large body of foreign mercenaries was also formed

under the command of their own officers, many of whom—members of the Crauford, Hamilton, Gordon, and other Scottish clans—settled in Russia and founded families there, whose descendants still exist.

Philaret died in 1633. His administration had greatly benefited his country, and, thanks to his strictly defensive foreign policy, Russia enjoyed a period of peace which enabled her to recover in some measure from the disorders of the previous century. In pursuance of this policy, the southern and eastern borders were fortified against the inroads of Tartar tribes. But when the town of Azov was offered to the Tsar by the Don Cossacks, who had wrested it from the Turks, it was refused, and, to avoid a rupture with the Porte, it was restored to the Sultan, in spite of its primary importance to Russia as affording her an outlet on the Black Sea.

Philaret's domestic reforms were continued by his son till the latter's death in 1645. Michael Romanov was twice married ; first to Maria Dolgorouki, whom he divorced, and secondly to Eudoxia Streckniev, by whom he had the son Alexis who succeeded him.

Alexis Mikhailovitch inherited the characteristics of his race, for though but moderately intelligent, he was gentle, humane, amiable, deeply religious, and full of good intentions. In appearance he was tall, fair, and inclined to be stout, with the low forehead and heavy cast of countenance pertaining to his somewhat limited mental development. He was neither a statesman nor a reformer ; but he attracted to himself men who were both, and his reign coincides with many far-reaching improvements which prepared the way for the further innovations of his son Peter the Great.

Barely sixteen at the time of his accession, Alexis was dominated from the first by his tutor, Boris Morozov, a man whose great abilities were only equalled

by his ambition, and who, like his prototype Boris Godounov, aimed solely at his own aggrandisement. Under Morozov's administration, bribery, corruption, and peculation were countenanced, the laws were unequally administered, the taxes were increased, and the oppression of the serfs by their masters became intolerable.

His first care was to provide Alexis with a wife, and Maria Miloslavski, the daughter of a small provincial noble, was selected, while Morozov at the same time espoused her sister Anna. As the brother-in-law of the Tsar, he greatly increased his own influence, and managed to restrain the latent ambitions of the upstart Miloslavskis by uniting them to his own.

In the same year, a new pretender arose in the person of a linen-draper of Vologda, who claimed to be that Ivan who had been hanged in 1614, the son of the second Ljedmitri. But that his pretensions were encouraged by Queen Christina of Sweden, his claims would have excited little interest or support, and having failed to enlist the sympathies of the Duke of Holstein, he was surrendered by that prince to Alexis, and executed at Moscow.

In 1648, the relentless taxation of the poor, culminated in the duty on salt, which limited the supply of salt fish, then, as now, the staple diet of the people. Rendered desperate by these accumulated burdens and by the repeated failure of their appeals for justice, the populace broke out into open revolt and clamoured for the blood of their oppressors, and of Morozov in particular. In Moscow the riot lasted three days; much blood was shed and many boyars were slain. Morozov narrowly escaped with his life, and not till the Tsar had sworn to dismiss the hated minister and to redress the popular grievances, did the storm subside. The insurrection, however, spread to the provinces, where it assumed much more formidable

dimensions, the citizens of Pskov and Novgorod organising a fierce resistance, which was overcome with difficulty by the Streltsi and foreign mercenaries.

Warned by this experience, Alexis set himself in earnest to right the national wrongs, and instituted a commission of inquiry which effected sweeping reforms in the fiscal and judicial systems, as well as in other State departments. Morozov was banished, to be later replaced by such statesmen as Ordin-Nashtchokin and Rishtchev, and the laws were revised and embodied in the *Ulozhenie*, or *Book of Ordinances*—a code which, while it confirmed the serfdom consequent on the Godounov ukase of 1597, did much in other ways to mitigate the lot of the peasantry.

Aided by these constitutional reforms, under the able guidance of Ordin-Nashtchokin, Russia quickly recovered her vitality, and was soon in a position to think of regaining the territories she had lost during the recent conflicts with Poland and Sweden.

Poland at that time was fully occupied with her own domestic affairs and with the strain of coping with the Cossacks of the Dnieper, who, under their ataman, Bogdan Khmielnitski, had revolted in defence of their civil and religious liberties. Khmielnitski had personal injuries to revenge, his son having been killed and he himself robbed of his wife and property by a Polish noble; but the Cossacks of the Ukraine, as a whole, had other grievances, and the rebellion assumed the aspect of a holy war, since in their eyes it had for its object, not only the ejection of their Polish oppressors, but the extermination of all Jews and Jesuits, as threats to the security of the Greek faith.

Strong in the righteousness of their cause, the Cossacks carried all before them, defeated the Polish general Potocki, captured Lemberg, and soon had nearly all Poland at their mercy. Peace was made; but Poland did not adhere to the terms of the treaty,

and the war was renewed in 1649. This time, however, Khmielnitski was less fortunate; his Tartar allies deserted him, and his consequent defeat at Beresteczko in Galicia, by Prince Wisniowiecki, in June 1651, seriously injured the Cossack cause.

Khmielnitski then endeavoured to form an alliance with the Turks; but at last, weary of oriental duplicity, and realising the impossibility of continuing single-handed the struggle against the united power of Poland and Rome, in 1654 he tendered the allegiance of the Cossacks and of the Ukraine to the Tsar of Muscovy, by whom it was gladly accepted. In return for the sovereignty of Ukraina, Alexis undertook to respect its independence. Thus, after a severance of over three centuries, Little or Kievite Russia was once more incorporated in the Russian empire, and the Cossacks of the Dnieper, like those of the Don, became vassals of Muscovy.

Naturally this secession led to rupture between Russia and Poland and the outbreak of the Thirteen Years War (1654–1667). But, rent by civil strife and domestic intrigue, Poland was in no condition for foreign assaults; Alexis was uniformly successful, till a counter-invasion of Poland by the Swedes under Charles X, compelled him to withdraw and defend his own borders.

A treaty with Sweden—a replica of that at Stolbovo some forty years previously—was signed at Kardis, in 1661, and the Russo-Polish war was then renewed, to drag on ingloriously for both sides, till finally concluded by the Truce of Androussovo in 1667. By this treaty Russia temporarily surrendered Vitebsk, Polotsk, and Polish Livonia; but her supremacy in that part of the Ukraine which was bordered by the eastern bank of the Dnieper was confirmed, and she recovered Smolensk, Tchernigov, Severia, and other places.

Territorially her wars had been successful, but the cost of so much military and political enterprise had been very great and the internal condition of Russia was once more at a low ebb. Taxation was necessarily increased, and owing to the lack of silver, a copper coinage was issued of the same nominal value, which further added to the national distress, the more, that the Miloslavskis sought to enrich themselves at the public expense, by transferring what little silver there was, into their own coffers. Another riot broke out in Moscow in 1662, which resulted in the death of thousands of the people, who were ruthlessly cut down by the imperial troops.

Notwithstanding these vicissitudes, the internal development of Russia, though slow, was continuous, and western luxuries, western manners, and, better still, western knowledge were gradually finding their way behind the apparently impenetrable wall of Russian isolation and prejudice.

The chancellor, Ordin-Nashtchokin, besides furthering the military and commercial reforms of the previous reign, did much to improve the economic conditions of his country; while Rishtchev, one of the court chamberlains and another great social reformer, endeavoured to promote the welfare of the democracy and to combat the intellectual stagnation prevalent among all classes of society, by providing free education at his own expense. Schools increased, and under the direction of Peter Mohyla, the enlightened Metropolitan of Kiev, academies were founded at Kiev and Moscow, where were inculcated foreign languages, the classics, and all arts and sciences not banned by the illiberality of the Greek Church.

Under the management of the monk Slavinitski, the imperial printing press issued many historical, literary, and scientific works, which were further developed by his successor, Simeon Sitianovitch,

better known as Polotski, from Polotsk his birthplace. Polotski, who also was a monk, became tutor to the royal children, and exercised great influence on the religious and secular thought of his day. He wrote plays, and, in imitation of European representations, a theatre was set up for their performance. Although, in deference to popular prejudice, only biblical scenes were enacted, they were a great improvement on the coarse marionette shows which had till then constituted Russia's sole conception of the dramatic art.

Intercourse with Europe was frequent, and Russia joined in the limited postal convention of those days, while foreign ambassadors came and went in Moscow, as in other more civilised capitals. The relations with England were especially friendly. Alexis corresponded personally with Charles I, supplied Charles II with money during his exile, and stoutly declined to recognise Cromwell as aught but a usurper and a danger to all legitimate authority. In 1664, after the Restoration, a complimentary embassy was sent to Russia by Charles II, and a vivid account by the secretary, Guy Miége, of the splendour of the Tsar and court of Muscovy, is still preserved.

Ecclesiastical reform was not neglected, and under Nikon, the famous Patriarch of Moscow—perhaps the predominating spirit of the reign—the Bible was revised, and those changes in the liturgy introduced, which led to the great schism of 1655.

Nikon, who was the son of a peasant, became a monk, and by his abilities and his success as a teacher and an administrator, rose from the abbotship of his own and other monasteries, to be Archbishop of Novgorod and finally Patriarch of Moscow. At Novgorod, his efforts for peace during the insurrection of 1647 earned him the gratitude of the court and brought him into contact with the Tsar, who soon fell under the spell of his dominant personality and made

him practically his colleague in the government of the empire. By his accession to the Patriarchate in 1652, Nikon, like his predecessor Philaret, attained to supreme temporal and ecclesiastical power at one and the same time.

A sincere reformer, he set himself to purge the Russian Church of abuses, as well as to purify and establish some degree of uniformity in the liturgy and ritual. He refused to countenance the gross illiteracy and immorality of the clergy, and ordered a revision of the Bible and service books, with the omission of the many errors, which, on comparison with the original manuscripts, they were found to contain. Many of the people and clergy, however, objected to these changes. They attached a superstitious reverence to the ancient rites and formulæ of their forefathers, and seeing the hand of Satan himself in such innovations, they preferred torture and death to submission, or even compromise. Thus began the Great Schism between the new ritualists and the old, which resulted in the formation of the latter into the Raskolniki or Schismatics, a sect which still exists, in spite of severe persecutions at different periods of their history. Nikon aimed not at innovation, but at restoration. He was undoubtedly right, but his proud and unbending nature could brook no opposition, and he authorised a ruthless persecution of the schismatics, which left an indelible stain on his reputation as a Christian prelate. Foremost among these martyrs were the priest Avvakum, the boyarinia Morozov (sister-in-law of Boris Morozov), and her sister the Princess Orusova. After enduring torture and great hardships with the utmost fortitude, all three suffered for their beliefs ; Avvakum was burnt with three of his disciples in 1681, and the two ladies were exiled to Siberia, where they were starved to death.

From 1652 to 1658 Nikon was supreme in Russia

and exercised his influence in every department of the State. The Tsar's affection for his mentor was great ; he wrote to him in terms of extravagant humility and would have continued his veneration, but for Nikon's own presumption. Arrogating to himself imperial honours and imperial state, he held that the spiritual power took precedence of all temporal authority, and maintained that the Patriarch of Moscow, as head of the Russian Church, was subject to no earthly control. Accordingly, he resented the Tsar's interference in any ecclesiastical matters. In 1658 his influence began to decline, and the Tsar, weary of his own subordination, determined to renounce the yoke of the capricious prelate. Nikon was disgraced and retired to a monastery outside Moscow, whence he issued fierce denunciations of his opponents and even of the gentle Tsar himself. But his rule was at an end, and although later reconciled to his master, he was degraded from the Patriarchate in 1666 and died in exile in 1681.

Much the same defects were the cause of Nashtchokin's downfall, for his ambition and arrogance proved his undoing also. Although of humble birth, Nashtchokin was morally and intellectually far superior to his contemporaries, while his honesty and genuine love of religion had greatly endeared him to the pious Alexis ; but his overbearing manner exasperated his enemies and gradually estranged the sympathies of the Tsar himself. He was dismissed from office in 1670 and retired to a monastery, where he became a monk, and died in 1680.

Nashtchokin was succeeded as chief minister by the enlightened boyar, Artamon Matveiev, whom historians agree to regard as the precursor of Peter the Great. His origin is uncertain, but he had been carefully educated, and his accomplishments and exceptional abilities not only placed him in the front

rank among the scholars of his day, but made him the head of the progressive party which aimed at raising Russia to the level of her European contemporaries. He had married a Scottish lady, a member of the Hamilton family, and at his house were to be found the western refinements of clocks, pictures, painted ceilings, and other luxuries till then unknown in Russia, and still regarded with awe as inventions of the Evil One. Alexis was a constant visitor to the house, and there he met his host's niece, the lovely Natalia Naryshkin, whom he subsequently married in January 1671. His first wife, Maria Miloslavski, had died in 1667, leaving several children, of whom two sons, Feodor and Ivan, and one daughter, Sophia, alone occupy any prominent place in the annals of their country. His second wife, Natalia, though much his junior, exercised a great influence over her husband. This became paramount after the birth of her son Peter in 1672, and under her auspices and those of her uncle, the atmosphere of the court and of Russian society in general, was much improved.

The latter years of Alexis' reign were much disturbed by a great rising of the Don Cossacks under their ferocious leader Stenka (Stephen) Razin, a man whom his romantic exploits have made a hero to the Russian peasantry to this day, but whom his cruelty, debauchery, and utter unscrupulousness have branded in the pages of history as one of the most bloodthirsty ruffians of those ruffianly times.

For years the Cossacks had ravaged the districts watered by the Don and the Volga, but in 1699, to revenge the death of his brother who had been executed as a rebel, Razin declared war on all governments and authority. At the head of a vast army of Cossacks and disaffected serfs, he made his name a terror from Nijni-Novgorod to the shores of the Caspian Sea. Fire, rapine, murder, and all the worst horrors of

invasion followed in his wake. Calling himself the champion of the poor, he waged savage war on all boyars and officials, whom he tortured and slew with maniacal cruelty. Having conquered Astrakhan, where he established his headquarters, he raided Persia, captured the Shah and his daughter, and kept the latter as his concubine, till the day when, in a fit of drunken frenzy, he flung her into the Volga, as a propitiatory sacrifice to the goddess of that river. By 1670 Razin had reduced all the important towns on the eastern frontier and extended his rule from Simbirsk to Astrakhan. He aimed at establishing a Cossack republic along the whole length of the Volga ; but, in 1671, the imperial troops under the princes Dolgorouki and Baryatinski, gradually gained the upper hand. After eight pitched battles the power of the insurgents was broken and they began to disperse. The influence of the infamous Stenka was also on the wane. In April 1671 he was betrayed into the hands of the government by his own people and was taken in chains to Moscow, where, after stoically enduring unspeakable tortures without so much as a groan, he was quartered alive.

The Tsar Alexis died in January 1676, at the early age of forty-five, nominating with his last breath his eldest son Feodor as his successor to the throne.

Much of the contemporary information concerning the two first Romanovs is obtained from the writings of Olearius, the envoy of the Duke of Holstein, who visited Muscovy during the reigns of the Tsar Michael and his son, and has left a vivid account of Russia, the Russian court, and the city of Moscow, all of which he describes at great length and with much detail. Further knowledge is derived from the letters of Dr Collins, the English medical attendant to the Tsar Alexis, as well as from the works of Kotoshikin, a clerk in government employ, who was disgraced on account of some official misdemeanour and fled to

Sweden, where he wrote his interesting though inimical account of Muscovy during the reign of Alexis. Another authority is the Serb, Krishanitch, a political exile banished to Siberia, whence he issued his treatises on Russia, numerous essays on Pan-Slavism and on other political subjects. All these writers give a gloomy picture of the mental and moral stagnation of Russia in the seventeenth century, for it must be remembered that, in spite of the efforts of reformers, drunkenness, ignorance, and immorality still prevailed in all classes, from the Tsar downwards. Corruption was rife in every department of the State. The condition of women was oriental in its degradation. Refinement was almost unknown, and the manners even of the nobles, disgusted all Europeans with whom they came in contact. Nevertheless, the regeneration of Russia had begun and the dawn of a better day was already showing on the horizon.

The new Tsar, Feodor III, a boy of fourteen, was a hopeless invalid, terribly disfigured and crippled by some obscure disease, which seems to have been either dropsy or tuberculosis, but was probably a combination of both. His days were so obviously numbered, that already the court was rent with intrigues as to his successor and with the struggles for supremacy of the rival factions. On the one hand, the Miloslavskis supported the claims of their family, in the persons of Feodor and his half-witted younger brother Ivan ; on the other, the Matveiev and Naryshkin party advocated the adoption of the little Peter, a sturdy child of four, in the place of his two sickly half-brothers.

Artamon Matveiev, plotting to place his great-nephew on the throne by means of a palace revolution, obtained the support of the Streltsi by bribery, and appealed to the Council of Boyars and the nation at

large, to remove the sceptre from the hand of one so obviously unfit to wield it as the unfortunate Feodor. But for the moment the Miloslavskis were in power. Feodor having been designated Tsar by his father on his deathbed, in the presence of the Patriarch of Moscow, was regarded as the rightful heir, and in his name the partisans of Peter were crushed. Artamon Matveiev was accused of witchcraft, flogged, and sent to Siberia; his property was confiscated and his adherents were imprisoned or exiled, while the ex-Tsaritsa was banished from court with her two children, Peter and Natalia, and compelled to live in retirement at Preobrajenskoe, a village a few miles outside the capital.

During the three years of Feodor's minority the Council of Boyars ruled in his name, with, of course, the Miloslavskis in the ascendant; but, on attaining his majority in 1679, the young Tsar took the government of the realm into his own hands, and, in spite of his youth and disabilities, acquitted himself with marked success. Choosing his ministers with a discernment beyond his years, he pursued his father's liberal and progressive policy, and had he lived, he would have equalled, if not excelled his brother's reputation as a reformer. Feodor possessed the nobler nature and the more brilliant intellect of the two, but, as became a man necessarily a recluse, his reforms were mainly ecclesiastical, while the more robust Peter concerned himself chiefly with the improvement and development of the State.

Cultivated and broadminded, thanks to the care of the learned Polotski, Feodor did his utmost to promote the welfare and combat the prejudices of his people. Education was fostered and the famous Academy of Sciences was founded in the Zaikonnospansky monastery in Moscow; the severity of the penal laws were relaxed, and the distinctions between class and class

were somewhat lessened. With the latter object in view, Feodor, acting on the advice of his minister, Prince Vassili Golitzin, abolished the system of the "Miestiechestvo," or service by rank, and sending for each boyar's family record of rank and precedence, he had them all burnt in his presence. By this drastic action, an ancient abuse which had obstructed public administration for generations, was destroyed, and civil and military appointments were thenceforth dependent on the merit, not on the birth of the recipient, —on the will of the Tsar, not on hereditary right, as had been previously the case.

Little of foreign importance occurred during Feodor's brief reign, which was mainly devoted to domestic reform.

In 1678 a renewal for thirty years of the Truce of Androussovo strengthened the *entente* with Poland, while, in 1680, the termination of the eight years war between Poland and Turkey, relieved Russia of much anxiety concerning the fate of her possessions in the Ukraine.

In 1679 Feodor married his cousin, Agatha Groutchka, but she died in 1681, and her child, the Tsarevitch Ilya, only survived his birth by a few days. In February of the following year, Feodor wedded Maria Apraksina, but his doom was sealed, and he expired in April 1682, leaving his throne a prey to the selfish ambitions of his numerous relatives.

Immediately on the death of Feodor the family feuds burst into flame; but the Naryshkins, striking whilst the iron was hot, presented the two young princes to the public, and appealed to the Council of Boyars and to the people to decide as to the relative merits of Peter, then a handsome, quick-witted, vigorous child of ten, and Ivan, who is said to have been nearly dumb, nearly blind, and wholly imbecile.

Interrogated as to their wishes by the Patriarch Joachim, the populace with one voice clamoured for "Petri Alexeivitch," and he was at once proclaimed Tsar, with his mother Natalia as regent during his minority. Artamon Matveiev was hurriedly recalled from Siberia to act as chief minister to the youthful monarch, and the difficulties of the succession seemed satisfactorily solved.

The Naryshkins, however, had reckoned without one important factor in the strength of the opposition, namely, the Princess Sophia, third daughter of the Tsar Alexis and a woman of exceptional ability, courage, and determination. Just twenty-five at the time of her entry into public affairs, Sophia possessed an aspect and a character which are variously estimated. Some historians call her handsome and high-principled, whilst others describe her as physically ugly and morally depraved. In reality, she seems to have been short, stout, somewhat hirsute and masculine in appearance, but with well-formed features and good eyes, while in character she combined a remarkable intellect and will-power, with boundless ambition and utter unscrupulousness. She had been educated far beyond the feminine standard of the day by her brothers' tutor, Polotski, and she burned to emancipate herself from the fetters of the terem, and to prove herself in fact, as she was in theory, the hope of the Miloslavskis. In these aspirations she was encouraged by her lover, the accomplished Prince Vassili Golitzin, to whom reference has already been made, and who foresaw in his mistress' elevation to power, the fulfilment of his projects for his own aggrandisement.

Four days after Peter's accession a mutiny of the Streltsi for higher pay gave Sophia and her accomplice the opportunity they desired, and by cleverly inflaming the already disaffected soldiery, they organised an

insurrection which was to take effect the moment Artamon Matveiev returned to power.

Disregarding all warnings of danger, Matveiev reached Moscow on 15th May, and, accompanied by members of his own and the royal family, he harangued the Streltsi from the head of the Red Staircase in the Kremlin palace. The sight of Prince Ivan, who was reported to have been murdered by the Naryshkins, somewhat appeased the mutineers, and the conciliatory speeches of Matveiev and the Patriarch completed their pacification.

All would have been well, for the Streltsi were prepared to disperse quietly, when their colonel, Prince Michael Dolgorouki, one of the Tsaritsa Natalia's partisans, began to abuse them for insubordination. At that, their fury burst out unrestrained. Dolgorouki was flung from the top of the stairs on to the pikes of the soldiery below; Matveiev, clinging desperately to the little Tsar, was torn away and hacked to pieces; two of Natalia's brothers were brutally murdered; and some seventy of her friends and relations are said to have perished in the butchery which ensued. The massacre continued for three days, during which the Streltsi, drunk with blood, invaded the Kremlin and slaughtered all and sundry; but at last, on 18th May, Sophia bade them stay their hand, and rewarded them for their services with a present of ten roubles apiece and the title of Court Infantry.

The supporters of the Tsar Peter being either killed or in hiding, Sophia was left in undisputed authority, and at her instigation, in response to the threats and demands of the Streltsi, it was ordained that the two princes, Ivan and Peter, were to reign as joint Tsars, with Ivan, the elder, first in dignity, and with the Tsarevna Sophia as their guardian and regent. The cause of the Miloslavskis had triumphed; Sophia

was now the virtual ruler of the realm, while Natalia and her son were relegated to the background and, except for rare public appearances on certain state occasions, were compelled to remain in strict retirement at Preobrajenskoe.

Sophia had attained her ends, but her path was beset with difficulties and it behoved her to walk warily. She owed everything to the Streltsi and they were not disposed to let her forget it. Her favourite, Golitzin, was universally unpopular, and her ambitions clashed with those of the Streltsi leader, Prince Ivan Khovanski, who, as the descendant of Gedemin of Lithuania and head of one of the oldest families in Russia, began to have visions of obtaining the imperial power for himself.

Sophia, moreover, scandalised the people by her total disregard of the traditions and customs previously regarded as inviolate for her sex. She took a personal part in the government, presided at all councils, received foreign ambassadors, and moved freely amongst her soldiers and the boyars of her court. Under the guidance of Golitzin, her foreign and domestic policies were even more progressive than those of her predecessors, while her encouragement and adoption of all western ideas still further lowered her in the public esteem. Khovanski was strongly conservative, and, in common with most of the Streltsi, was an Old Believer, with all the Raskolniki dislike of anything new. Sophia had served their purpose, and when the stream of her favours diminished, the Streltsi began to regret the innovation they had themselves instigated by placing a woman at the head of affairs. They now strongly urged her to return to the seclusion of the terem and to leave public and political matters to her betters. Hoping to hasten her resignation and also to obtain a revocation of the New Beliefs propagated by Nikon, they organised a fresh rising against the Regent, which, although at first repressed with difficulty, in the end

left her still in the ascendant, with greatly increased authority.

In July 1682 a special Ecclesiastical Council was convened to investigate their grievances, at which, in defiance of tradition, Sophia was present ; and by her courage and firmness in handling a difficult situation, she succeeded, single-handed, in suppressing the incipient revolution and in reducing the Streltsi to temporary submission.

The storm, however, was but delayed, for a second and fiercer revolt broke out soon afterwards. Sophia fled from the capital with the two Tsars, and establishing her court at Kolmenskoe, outside Moscow, prepared to do battle for her prerogatives.

Khovanski, who was openly spreading sedition among the inhabitants of Moscow, and urging the necessity of suppressing feminine presumption, continued to inflame the Streltsi. But, before he could strike, Sophia, exercising all her powers of fascination, which seem to have been considerable, had collected a large body of zealous adherents, by whose agency Khovanski and his sons were arrested, tried for high treason, and executed. The main body of the Streltsi, intimidated by the loss of their leader and by the news that Sophia was assembling a punitory force at the Troitsa monastery, hastened to throw down their arms, and with ropes round their necks, in token of their abject submission, presented themselves before the Regent to plead for pardon. It was granted, but with the loss of all their recently acquired honours and privileges. Afterwards the court and the "Virgin Ruler," as Sophia liked to be called, re-entered the Kremlin in triumph.

The influence of Golitzin was now paramount with the Regent, who made no secret of her passion for her attractive and accomplished minister, and loaded him with honours to the disgust of all the court. Golitzin's

faults and failings were many : he was no soldier and he was a coward, but he was a great statesman and diplomatist. Under his administration, and that of his colleague and secretary, Feodor Shaklovity, Russia gained greatly in political importance and, for the first time, joined the Concert of Europe as a primary power.

In 1683 the Ottoman menace, always a constant danger to Eastern Europe, became acute. A large Turkish army invaded Austria and besieged Vienna. Repulsed by John Sobieski, they withdrew to their own land, but it was a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*, and to meet the threatened attack, the Holy League between Austria, Rome, Venice, and Poland was formed, in which Russia was invited to participate. As a Turkish invasion of Austria necessarily imperilled the safety of Poland and Muscovy, the last-named, after some hesitation, joined the League, the more readily that it gave her an opportunity of breaking with the Porte's ally, the Khan of the Crimea, to whom, as in the days of Ivan III, Russia still paid a shameful tribute, as indemnity against the Tartar slave raids in the south.

Negotiations with Poland were concluded in 1686, when the Truce of Androussovo was converted into a permanent peace and Russia's occupation of Kiev and the Ukraine was definitely confirmed.

Russia was now committed to war with Turkey, and in the autumn of 1687 Golitzin proceeded to invade the Crimea at the head of a large army of Muscovites and Cossacks. But he was compelled to return home without encountering the enemy, owing to disastrous steppe fires, which destroyed all the grass and consequently all the fodder for his horses and effectually hindered his further progress. The Cossacks themselves, fearing to be involved in the subjection of the Crimea, were suspected as the authors of this con-

flagration ; their Hetman was deprived of his office and banished, and Ivan Mazeppa was elected in his stead. Sophia strove to disguise the fact of her favourite's disgrace by extravagant praises and public jubilations ; but the disaster increased his unpopularity with the people, and a determined effort to assassinate him was made soon afterwards, as he was driving through the streets of Moscow in his sledge.

To redeem the Crimean fiasco and to fulfil Russia's obligations to her confederates in the Holy League, a second campaign against the Turks was organised in 1689, with Golitzin again in command ; but the public had no confidence in his capacities as a general, and it is said that an open grave was dug before his house by unknown hands, with the inscription, " For the Commander-in-Chief, if the second expedition fails."

The enterprise, like the first, was unsuccessful. Although the Tartars were defeated, lack of water this time prevented Golitzin's advance, and he once more returned to Moscow, to be accorded a public triumph as a military hero by the infatuated Regent, who herself took a prominent part in the procession. Peter, indignant at this farce, is said to have vehemently protested, and when Golitzin, as in duty bound, presented himself at Preobrajenskoe to pay his respects, he was refused admission.

The joint Tsars, Ivan and Peter, were now twenty-two and seventeen years old respectively, of an age, according to Russian law, to undertake the government of their kingdom for themselves. But Sophia was not easily displaced, and of the two princes, Ivan was too feeble-minded, and Peter, as yet, too indifferent to make the attempt.

Peter had developed into a well-grown, handsome, young giant, over six feet in height, immensely powerful and dowered with an iron constitution that nothing

but years of debauchery and excess could ever have undermined. He was, however, afflicted all his life with nervous spasms, violent headaches, and frequent convulsions, due, it is supposed, to the shock he had sustained in infancy from the horrors he had witnessed at the time of his accession. He was naturally intelligent and attractive, but his mental and moral education had been shamefully neglected, both by the Regent—who hoped thus to render him incapable of ruling—and by his mother, who, in spite of her early advantages, seems to have been rather stupid and culpably indolent. When he was in his eighth year, Nikita Zotov, his tutor, was removed and never replaced, so that although Peter could read, writing and spelling were always a difficulty to him, while of foreign languages, of the classics, and of the other graces of civilisation he had no knowledge whatever.

As a result, in early youth, the active, impetuous child ran wild at Preobrajenskoe amongst the village lads of his own age. Scorning the monotony of his mother's terem, he infinitely preferred the amusements of the streets and of the foreign quarter of Moscow, where he acquired a taste for low life and for the manners and morals of the people, which he never outgrew, and which rendered him always awkward in the society of his equals and most at his ease with the dregs of the populace.

Ignorant boor though he was, Peter had a wonderfully keen and inquiring mind, with a genius for mechanics and an insatiable thirst for all branches of technical knowledge. Fired with the notion of some day making a name on the field of battle for himself and the Russian armies, he devoted himself to the study of military science, and at the age of twelve, constructed a wooden fortress, complete with the fortifications of the day, where, in company with his boy companions, he practised the principles of soldiering. At fourteen,

he discovered an old boat, which he learnt to sail under the direction of the Dutchman Franz Timmermann, who taught him also the rudiments of arithmetic and geometry, and thus laid the foundation of that interest in ships and shipbuilding which led later to the creation of a Russian navy.

As the boy grew older, his interest in navigation increased, and he went further afield for his amusements, while the Dutch shipbuilder, Christian Brandt, constructed larger vessels for him, which he sailed on the lake at Pereyaslavl, some eighty miles from Moscow.

His war games were conducted with the utmost earnestness, severe wounds and sometimes even death resulting from these mimic battles.

Instructed by General Patrick Gordon, a Scottish mercenary, who had served under his father the Tsar Alexis, Peter and his companions became proficient in all the arts of war ; trenches were dug, forts taken and defended, even artillery was employed, the Tsar occupying the humble post of a bombardier in his own army. As this miniature force increased in size and importance, the famous Preobrajenski and Semeonovski regiments were formed, which, originating with the few grooms, villagers, and other lads of Peter's " Jolly Company," as he termed them, gradually swelled to the number of 1500 picked men, of all ranks and nationalities.

The Tsaritsa Natalia, alarmed at these dangerous amusements, strove to keep her son at home, and to this end, married him, in 1689, to Eudoxia Lopoukhina, a gentle, amiable girl of no pretensions, few abilities, and all a Russian's dislike of innovation and reform. Peter, who was frankly bored with his bride, and had married her only in obedience to his mother's wishes, made no pretence at affection. Three months after his marriage, he was back at Pereyaslavl, busy with

his boats, his soldiers, and alas! with those constant carousals, which not only ruined his health, but were the cause of the palsied hand that, together with his twitching face and uncouth manners, became in later life his distinguishing characteristics.

Sophia too was viewing her brother's activities with growing apprehension, and noting not only his increasing tendency to resent her control, but also the fact that his genial disposition and military ardour were proving more attractive to the Streltsi and the younger members of the court than was at all desirable.

Some years previously, hoping for an heir who should oust Peter from the throne, Sophia had married the imbecile Ivan to Praskovia Saltikov; but only three daughters—Catherine, Anna, and Praskovia—had so far resulted from this union, so that Peter's position was not only unimpaired, but strengthened.

More from a boyish desire to annoy his autocratic sister than from any real wish to undermine her authority, Peter began to evince a perverse interest in public affairs and an inclination to thwart her decisions, which seriously alarmed the Regent and convinced her that to maintain her position he must be suppressed at all costs and that quickly. Shaklovity, counselling murder as the best solution of the difficulty, incited the Streltsi to slay "the old she-bear and her cub," but Sophia and Golitzin shrank from open villainy and trusting to effect their purpose by intrigue, hatched plots innumerable for the removal of their inconvenient rival.

In August 1689, the report was spread abroad that Peter at the head of an army of desperadoes was marching on Moscow, intending to destroy Ivan and his sister, with all the Miloslavski family, and to seize the supreme power for himself, as sole Tsar of Muscovy. As a precaution against this fictitious danger, Sophia sought shelter in the Kremlin. Summoning the

Streltsi to her assistance, she confided her life and that of her brother to their care, while she tearfully entreated their protection against Peter's machinations.

A few days later, warning was conveyed to Peter that an attempt on his life was about to be made. Roused from his bed at midnight, he galloped, half-dressed as he was, to the Troitsa Monastery, where he was joined a few hours later by his wife and mother, and by a large body of Streltsi and foreign mercenaries under his faithful adherent Patrick Gordon.

There was now open war between the two camps, but Sophia had lost her influence ; many causes had rendered her unpopular both with the Streltsi and the people, whereas Peter's genial, merry ways had won all hearts and especially endeared him to the democracy.

Assuming the authority due to his position, Peter summoned ten men out of every Streltsi regiment, to appear before him within twenty-four hours. Sophia forbade the soldiers on pain of death to obey the order, but her threats and entreaties were alike in vain. The remainder of the Streltsi and a large number of boyars deserted to Troitsa and placed themselves unreservedly at Peter's disposal. Sophia then sent the Patriarch to negotiate with her half-brother, but Joachim had no mind to support a losing cause. Once at Troitsa, he remained there, tendered his allegiance to Peter, and greatly strengthened the latter's position by his presence.

In desperation, Sophia herself set out for Troitsa, but halfway thither she was stopped and turned back by Peter's orders, the Tsar refusing to treat with her, or even to answer for her safety should she persist in her efforts to see him. The Regent's ruin was complete. Her lover Prince Vassili Golitzin had already fled, and her troops and the boyars of her court had one and all deserted her. Shaklovity, the one man who had remained faithful to her cause, she

was compelled to deliver into Peter's hands, by whose orders he was tortured to extract a confession of guilt and finally executed as a traitor, together with his accomplices in the recent conspiracy. Golitzin's life was spared, at the intercession of Prince Boris Golitzin, his cousin and Peter's great friend; but he was deprived of his property and exiled to Siberia. Sophia, permitted to choose her own retreat, retired to the Novodyevsky convent, outside Moscow, where one can but pity her fate,—once the proud, masterful, all-powerful ruler of Russia, now shorn of her glory, bereft of her friends, and condemned in the heyday of life to the seclusion and inaction of a nunnery.

The half-witted Ivan, whom Peter seems to have regarded with a sort of pitying affection and to have always treated with kindness and consideration, remained untouched by, and probably unconscious of this political upheaval. He continued his nominal rule jointly with his half-brother till his death in 1696. But Peter's supremacy was absolute, and his reign as sole Tsar is generally considered to date from the overthrow of his sister's regency in September 1689.

CHAPTER VI

PETER THE GREAT

1689–1725

PETER I was now Tsar in fact as well as in name, but affairs of state as yet held no attraction for him. He therefore resigned the duties of government to his uncle Lev Naryshkin and to the Patriarch Joachim, while he himself returned to his occupations at Preobrajenskoe and Pereyaslavl, where he divided his time between his boats, his soldiers, and his sham fights, interlarded with debauches such as even contemporary writers hesitate to describe.

Earlier in this year, Peter had made the acquaintance of François Lefort, a Swiss soldier of fortune who, after some years service in the Russian army, had married a relative of Patrick Gordon and settled down to live in the foreign quarter at Moscow. Lefort, in spite of frequent and even bloody altercations with his patron, remained one of Peter's closest friends till his death in 1699. He was a disreputable rascal, with a capacity for drink that put even Peter's performances to shame, but he was possessed of great personal charm, a ready wit, and a spirit of devilry which fascinated the Tsar and made him the leading spirit in the wild revels of the Jolly Company. His house was the resort of all the dissolute men and women of the capital. There Peter met his first mistress, Anna Mons, the buxom daughter of a German wine merchant ; and there he developed that latent taste for vice and dissipation,

the recollection of which, together with his bursts of fury and his ferocious cruelty, have forever prejudiced the judgment of posterity in his disfavour.

Evil companion as he undoubtedly was for the young and impressionable Tsar, Lefort was genuinely devoted to his master and shrewd enough to perceive the germs of genius in the latter's eccentricities. No man is wholly vile, and it was Lefort, the drunken libertine, who first roused Peter to a consciousness of his responsibilities and who imbued him with that sense of his duty to the nation which made him the servant of his people and the future regenerator of Russia.

From 1689 onwards the tone of the Jolly Company was changed. Its debauches were no less frequent and unseemly, its members were still composed of the riff-raff of society with whom in the course of his wanderings Peter came into contact; but it also included men of every rank and nationality, chosen for a superior ability and knowledge which entitled them not only to the favour of the Tsar, but to a foremost place among the statesmen and scientists of their day.

One of Peter's first acts on becoming his own master was to order a frigate of forty-four guns from Holland. Pereyaslavl had grown too small for the ardent mariner, —he longed for real ships and a real sea, and in 1693 he went to Archangel, where he got his first view of the ocean, and studied navigation and shipbuilding under the foreign shipwrights of that port.

He was recalled early in 1694 by the death of his mother, to whom he was sincerely attached. But though he deeply mourned her loss, he drowned his sorrow in a three days' drinking bout with Lefort and then returned to Archangel to receive his new vessel from Amsterdam, and to learn to sail her himself.

Peter's affections were his most vulnerable point

and the death of the Tsaritsa Natalia removed one of the few softening elements in his life. For her sake he had married Eudoxia Lopoukhina and accorded her the outward respect due to her position as his consort and the mother of the Tsarevitch Alexis. But he had never liked her. Her society, her anti-progressive views, even her love for himself, bored him unutterably. When once deprived of his mother's restraining influence, therefore, he hastened to free himself from the silent reproach of his wife's presence at court and forced her to retire to a convent.

His dreams of a Russian navy grew, but he needed ships and the seas on which to sail them. His own northern waters were frozen for nine months out of the year, while the Baltic belonged to Sweden, too strong and too experienced a military power to attack with impunity. There remained the Black Sea, and at that time the advantages of a war with Turkey were many. Russia's participation in the Holy League ; the appeals of the Patriarch of Jerusalem for help against Moslem tyranny ; the necessity of suppressing once and for all the Tartar depredations in the south ; above all the national disappointment at Peter's long inactivity, all pointed to the desirability of a crusade against the Ottoman empire.

War was declared in 1695, and an army commanded by Lefort and Patrick Gordon—and which included a large body of Cossacks led by their hetman, Ivan Mazeppa, and a battery of artillery under bombardier Peter—marched south, with the town of Azov as its first objective. The Muscovite forces besieged Azov for a month without avail, and then were attacked and severely defeated by the Turks, owing, it is said, to the treachery of a German gunner named Jansen, who, to revenge some personal grievance against Peter, spiked the Russian guns and deserted to the enemy. The expedition ended in complete failure, and in

November Peter returned to Moscow, resolved at whatever cost to wipe out the disgrace.

This reverse, however, severe as it was, became indirectly the cause of Peter's future pre-eminence. It roused him from thoughts of personal pleasure, and gave an impetus to his energy and determination and to his genius for organisation. Taught by experience, he saw clearly wherein had lain the weakness of the first expedition and he determined to repair those errors without delay. The army had been ill-trained and ill-equipped; the fleet insufficiently and badly handled. Next time Azov should be attacked by sea and both army and navy should be in a state of efficiency which would render defeat impossible.

But a fleet had first to be built and the army reorganised. To accomplish this, shipwrights from England and Holland, gunners, mechanics, and engineers from Austria and Germany, soldiers, foreign mercenaries, and all the able-bodied men in Russia, headed by the Tsar himself, were pressed into the service and forced to take part in the work of reconstruction. Thus in May 1696, by superhuman effort, in less than six months, Peter had a fleet of 1700 vessels commanded by "Admiral" Lefort, as well as a well-disciplined army under Generals Schein and Gordon, ready to embark on the second campaign against the Turks.

This time all went well. Azov was captured, the Turks and Tartars were defeated, and Peter re-entered Moscow in triumphal procession, walking behind the sledges of the commanders-in-chief as Captain Peter Alexievitch of the bombardiers. The traitor Jansen, who had been surrendered by the Turks, was paraded in chains through the city and then executed.

The strategic importance of Azov as an outlet to the Black Sea was fully realised. It was decided to strengthen and strongly to garrison the fortress and to convert the town from an oriental to a Muscovite

centre, by drafting 3000 Russian colonists to replace the original inhabitants. Taganrog, at the head of the Sea of Azov, was founded and established as a naval base where a second fleet was built, which, however, never justified its existence.

Peter had acquired an opening on the sea at last; but the Turks were not likely to part with so important a possession without a struggle, and Russia's chances of success in a long unaided war against the Porte were remote. It was imperative to obtain assistance in the coming conflict. For this purpose it was decided to despatch to all the great European Powers an embassy of 270 leading Muscovites, with Lefort at their head, to entreat co-operation against the Turk and incidentally to study western civilisation and western systems of government. The Tsar attached himself to this mission in a private capacity, as Peter Mikhailov, intending to study foreign methods of shipbuilding, with other branches of technical knowledge, and to see something of that world of which he heard so much from his seafaring acquaintances.

At the last moment his departure was delayed by a rising of the Streltsi and a few of the Raskolniki boyars, who, disgusted at Peter's innovations and love of foreigners, plotted to assassinate him and establish a reactionary government. The conspiracy was discovered and suppressed with all the savagery of which the Tsar was capable when inspired by fear for his own personal safety, the ringleaders being executed with unheard-of barbarity.

The Grand European Mission was now able to start, and, setting forth in March 1697, was absent from Russia for nearly eighteen months. Proceeding by way of Sweden and Denmark, the envoys visited Brandenburg, Hanover, and the Rhine. Thence they journeyed to Holland, where Peter parted from the main body of his companions and settled at Zaandam

for nearly five months, learning shipbuilding and other trades and consorting on equal terms with the carpenters and workmen of the shipyards. In January 1698, he went to England, where he spent most of his time in the royal dockyards at Deptford ; but he held frequent converse with William III, for whom he entertained an unreciprocated admiration, and he seems for once to have associated with members of the court and not with the lowest strata of society only. Returning to Holland in April, he proceeded to rejoin the embassy at Vienna, but he was recalled to Russia in August, by news of a fresh outbreak among the Streltsi.

The value of Peter's foreign travels is variously estimated by posterity, but from the Tsar's point of view the journey had been of incalculable benefit. With the object of teaching and improving his people, he had learnt much and seen more, from shipbuilding, gunnery, paper-making, and engraving, to dentistry, surgery, and practical anatomy. His energy and thirst for knowledge were insatiable ; he had been everywhere and seen everything, and he returned to his own land more than ever imbued with the conviction of western superiority and the determination to raise Russia to the same level.

Diplomatically, however, the Grand Mission failed, for Europe was far too occupied with the prospect of the inevitable war of the Spanish Succession, to concern herself with eastern questions, or with the fate of the Muscovite barbarians. Indeed, on the whole, it was felt that a war between Russia and Turkey would be of use, as keeping the latter employed and thus leaving Austria free to cope with the growing ambitions of France. Moreover, the impression left on the mind of civilisation by Peter and his embassy was far from favourable. Foreign courts were aghast at the Tsar's uncouth manners and speech, his coarseness,

his filthy habits, unbridled license, and constant state of inebriation. At Deptford, where John Evelyn's house was placed at his disposal, he seems to have indulged in much the same kind of revelry as took place in his wooden hut at Preobrajenskoe, and so great was the damage done to the famous diarist's property, that large sums had to be expended by the English Treasury on the necessary repairs.

The Streltsi revolt in June 1698 was a protest against the severity of their lot under Peter's rule, as compared with their former life of idleness and ease. Once they had been the pampered Court Infantry, now they were compelled to work hard at their profession—to build and garrison fortresses in distant and desolate parts of the country, to drill, to fight, and to maintain their physical and military efficiency by constant discipline. They disliked the change and, incited by a letter supposed to have been written by the ex-Regent Sophia from her convent prison, they broke out into open rebellion and marched, some 3000 strong, against Moscow, intending to destroy the foreign quarter and its inmates, to dethrone Peter, and to re-establish Sophia in his stead, or, failing her, Vassili Golitzin. The mutineers were easily suppressed by the two generals, Schein and Gordon, and the leaders were executed, while the remainder were imprisoned, to await the Tsar's decision as to their ultimate fate.

Peter returned in August and instituted a savage butchery of the Streltsi and their adherents, which lasted for nearly two months, and surpassed in horror all previous records in Russia's bloodstained history. The Streltsi and their plots had overshadowed Peter's life from his earliest infancy ; he regarded them as his inveterate enemies and as the chief obstacle to his schemes for national reform, so he determined to sweep them from his path. Deaf to all remonstrances,

he tortured and slew these Old Believers, till over 1500 of them had been massacred, the Tsar himself acting as executioner on several occasions and forcing his unwilling—and equally unskilful—companions to do the same, with what additional torment to his already mangled victims, can be easily imagined.

The Streltsi exterminated, Peter turned his attention to the rest of the reactionary party. He destroyed the remainder of the Miloslavski family, and put an end to Sophia's opportunities for intrigue, by causing her to be shorn as a nun and, under the name of Sister Susanna, to be imprisoned for life in a distant convent, where she died in 1704. Pretending to find traces of his wife's complicity in the same conspiracy, Peter seized the opportunity to sever all connection with the wholly innocent Eudoxia, whose only faults had been her inconvenient love for himself and a somewhat tactless if natural resentment of her husband's flagrant infidelities. She, too, was compelled to take the veil, as Sister Helena, and was banished to a convent in Suzdal. Her marriage was annulled and her little son Alexis, then nine years old, was removed from her care and committed to the keeping of his aunt Natalia.

After the suppression of the conservatives, Peter felt himself, for the first time, master of the situation, and he proceeded to put into force some of his new schemes for the westernisation of Russia and for the improvement of public life. He attempted to suppress the corruption prevalent in every state department, by severe punishments and by establishing a system of inspectors, under Alexei Kourbatov, who were responsible for the supervision of all government offices and public funds. He also issued a series of edicts which cut at the roots of many of Russia's most cherished traditions. The flowing oriental dress of the people was to be replaced by western garments of more practical cut. The long hair and beards of the laity

were to be shaven, or only permitted on payment of a heavy tax; and with the close of the seventeenth century, the New Year was to be reckoned from 1st January, in European fashion, and no longer from 1st September, the supposed date of creation. Such innovations roused fierce opposition amongst all classes of society; but there was no appeal from the will of this autocratic democrat, whose violent methods of coercion were due to a genuine desire for the enlightenment of his people and a conviction that unless they were reformed at the point of the sword. so to speak, they would never be reformed at all.

The deaths of Lefort and Patrick Gordon, in 1699, deprived Peter of two of his oldest and most valued supporters and compelled him to look amongst the members of his Company for their successors. Lefort was replaced as Admiral-General by Feodor Golovin, whose statesmanship and diplomatic abilities soon raised him to the position of chancellor and premier minister, which offices he filled with conspicuous success till his death in 1706. His post as naval and military administrator was then shared between Feodor Apraksin and Count Gabriel Golovkin, both of them intimate friends of Peter and members of the Jolly Company of their mutual childhood. Gordon was succeeded as commander-in-chief by Boris Sheremetev; and Shavirov, a converted Jew, became vice-chancellor and minister of finance. But foremost amongst these "fledglings," as Peter now termed the members of the company, was Alexius Mentchikov, who replaced Lefort in the affections of the Tsar and who, until his master's death, was rarely separated from him. Believed to have been a pieman in the streets of Moscow, Mentchikov attracted the notice of Lefort, who made him his valet, and finally transferred him to Peter's service, on account of his ready wit and smart appearance. Mentchikov was quite

illiterate ; although he managed in course of time to sign his name, he never learnt to read. But he soon made himself indispensable to the Tsar and all powerful at court. He accompanied Peter during his apprenticeship in England and Holland, shared in all his master's pursuits, and on his return to Russia, by his extraordinary talents and versatility, rose rapidly to be admiral, general, chief minister, confidant, and a prince of the realm. Corrupt and avaricious as he was, he justified the Tsar's belief in his abilities and was Peter's chief collaborator in the work of regenerating Russia.

Russian overtures for European assistance against Turkey having failed, peace with the Porte became inevitable, and with it the renunciation of the Black Sea and of all Peter's dreams of his country's future greatness and prosperity by means of her mercantile marine. A truce for two years had been concluded in 1698, but at the end of that time the Turks, he knew, meant at all costs to regain control of their own waters, while the Russian navy and army being still in their infancy, were as yet unable to cope with the powerful and more experienced forces of the Ottoman empire. Under the astute Golovin, negotiations for a permanent peace with, if possible, the retention of Azov, were opened in 1699, and Peter set himself to obtain elsewhere the seaboard necessary to his imperial schemes.

Blocked in the South, his thoughts turned perforce to the North. He determined to " open the window on Europe " which he so ardently desired, by means of the Baltic Sea, as giving easier access to the rest of the continent and embracing a greater portion of his own coast-line. Russian jealousy of Sweden was great, and dated from the loss of the Baltic Provinces by the Treaty of Stolbovo, in 1617, while the contemptuous treatment by Charles XI, of both the Tsar and the Grand Mission in 1697, had deeply offended Peter

and filled him with a burning desire to avenge these slights and humble the pride of his haughty neighbour to the dust.

The embers of this enmity were fanned to flame by Augustus II of Saxony, who, as electoral King of Poland, also resented the Swedish supremacy, which he endeavoured to repress by every means in his power. In this he was aided and abetted by John Reinhold Patkul, a Livonian noble, who, exiled from his native land on account of his political opinions and condemned to death for high treason in 1693, had taken refuge with the Elector of Saxony and eventually entered the service of his protector. Bent on destroying the power of the house of Vasa and freeing Livonia from the Swedish yoke, Patkul incited Augustus to seize that province for himself, and became the prime mover in the league between Saxony and Russia which led to the outbreak of the Northern War, and had for its objects the suppression of Swedish ascendancy in the North and the recovery of lost territories by each of the allies.

The times seemed propitious for the accomplishment of this dual design, for Charles XI had died, and his son Charles XII who succeeded him, was a lad of barely fifteen, who gave no signs of his future greatness, and was devoted solely to amusement, hunting, and wild practical jokes, such as had disgraced the youth of the barbarian Peter.

Anxious to conceal his real intentions as long as possible, Peter had already renewed his treaty obligations with Sweden, and sworn to observe the conditions of the Peace of Kardis in 1661. Nevertheless, with unpardonable duplicity, he did not hesitate to renounce his oath, and in 1699, at Preobrajenskoe, a secret treaty for the partition of Sweden was drawn up between the three allies. By this, Frederick IV, King of Denmark and Norway, and Augustus of Saxony,

agreed to fall simultaneously on their unsuspecting neighbour, while Peter undertook to invade the Baltic Provinces as soon as the peace between Turkey and Russia had been confirmed.

The war was begun by Denmark and Saxony at the beginning of 1700, but, owing to protracted negotiations with the Porte, Russia did not take the field till August of that year. By that time, both Frederick and Augustus had suffered serious reverses and were loud in their demands that the Tsar should fulfil his part of the contract and create a diversion by invading Ingria.

A truce for thirty years was concluded with Turkey in July, and the moment the news reached Peter he crossed the Swedish frontier. In October he proceeded to besiege the fortress of Narva with a force of 40,000 men, under the joint command of himself and his chief minister Golovin. Narva, the key to the province of Ingria, proved unexpectedly impregnable. Under its commandant Rudolf Horn, it maintained an obstinate defence, till relieved towards the middle of November by the unlooked-for appearance of the young King Charles XII in person, at the head of a large army.

On receiving news of Charles' rapid approach, the Tsar, whether from prudence or cowardice, immediately fled to Novgorod, taking Golovin with him, as too valuable to lose. The Russian army, deprived of its leaders and already demoralised at the prospect of the forthcoming encounter with the invincible Charles, was abandoned to its fate, and utterly defeated on 20th November 1700.

Peter's ignoble conduct on this occasion is difficult to understand and has given rise to much historical controversy. Want of courage was not usually one of his failings, but Charles was believed to be fighting in Denmark, and his unexpected presence at Narva

may well have engendered panic in the mind of the inexperienced Tsar, who knew himself no match for the military genius of his great opponent. The Russian army, moreover, mostly composed of raw, untrained recruits, could not hope to contend successfully with the Swedish veterans, so that defeat being inevitable, Peter may have decided to live to repair the disaster, rather than to court certain death on a battlefield where his overthrow was a foregone conclusion. Subsequent events justified this decision, but the fiasco at Narva provoked the scornful amusement of all Europe and left a stain on the prestige of both Tsar and Tsardom which it took years to obliterate.

Adversity, however, always called forth all that was great in Peter and stimulated him to fresh efforts. He set himself at once to retrieve his position in the eyes of Europe and devoted all his energies to the formation of a new and a better army, wherewith to wipe out his disgrace and fulfil his obligations to the Northern League. In this he was unwittingly assisted by Charles himself, who, to his own future undoing as it proved, instead of following up the victory at Narva by the invasion of Muscovy, turned contemptuously aside and sought foes more worthy of his steel in Denmark and Saxony. Regarding the Russians as mere barbarians, with all the barbarian duplicity and cowardice, he deemed them too pusillanimous to be worthy of future notice. "There is no glory in winning victories over the Muscovites; they can be beaten at any time," he said, and gave his whole attention to the annihilation of his arch-enemy the Elector of Saxony.

With his usual genius for organisation, Peter profited by this respite to such purpose, that in less than a year he was able to supply his allies with men, money, and artillery, while by the end of 1701, he was himself in a position once more to take the

field. Under Sheremetev, the Russian troops ravaged Livonia and inflicted severe defeats on the Swedish general Schlippenbach at Errestfur, near Dorpat, and again at Himmelshof. In the summer of 1702, the Tsar himself directed operations and captured the fortress of Nöteberg, which, though small, was of great strategic importance, owing to its position at the junction of Lake Ladoga and the River Neva. This fortress Peter re-christened by its modern name of Schlüsselburg, and the subsequent seizure of Nyanskans, at the mouth of the Neva, in the spring of 1703, gave him command of the districts on both sides of the river.

Perceiving its possibilities and anxious to retain possession of this outlet on the Gulf of Finland, but above all, to transfer the seat of government from Moscow, which, with its hidebound traditions and reactionary tendencies, had always been distasteful to him, Peter proceeded to drain the marshes at the mouth of the river. There he founded—it is said on the bones of the thousands of Swedish prisoners, Cossacks, and other workmen who perished in the swamps—the little wooden settlement, which he called Petersburg, and which henceforth became the capital of the Russian empire. Owing to its close proximity to Sweden, its unhealthy situation, and its numerous disadvantages as a naval port, Peter's choice of a site for his new city met with much adverse criticism. But, regardless of objections, he persisted in his enterprise, compelled the boyars to build themselves houses and to settle there, erected the fortress of Kronstadt for the protection of Petersburg from attacks by sea, constructed wharves, built ships, and, by raising the harbour dues at Archangel, enticed foreign merchants to make use of his new port in the prosecution of their trade with northern Russia.

By the autumn of 1704, the Russians carrying all

FORM THE MIND OF THE FUTURE TSAR

before them, had overrun the province of Ingria, reduced its chief towns to ashes and captured the important fortresses of Dorpat and Narva. After this latter triumph, Peter, feeling no doubt that he had fully redeemed his failure at the beginning of the war and obtained all that he wanted in the Baltic Provinces, made overtures for peace with Sweden, on condition that his possession of Petersburg was confirmed. Charles XII, however, intending to chastise Muscovy at his leisure, refused to treat, while Europe, regarding the Russians as beyond the pale of civilisation, and horrified at their barbarous excesses in Ingria and Livonia, ignored Peter's efforts to re-establish diplomatic relations with the West, and turned a deaf ear to his requests for the mediation of the great Powers between himself and his adversary.

No other course being open to him, Peter was obliged to continue the war and entered Poland in May 1705, with a view to assisting the sorely-pressed Elector of Saxony. Here, however, opposed by the great Charles himself and by such generals as Löwenhaupt and Rehnskjöld, the Tsar was less successful. He was defeated at Gemauerhof in Courland, in July, and again at Fraustadt in February 1706, after which the Muscovites beat a rapid retreat into Russia, whither the exhausted Swedish army was unable to follow them.

Augustus meanwhile had been utterly crushed. In September 1706, he was forced to subscribe to the humiliating peace of Altranstadt, whereby he agreed to resign the crown of Poland to Charles' nominee Stanislaus Leszczinski, to cease from all further hostilities against Sweden, and to maintain a Swedish army in Saxony throughout the coming winter. With shameful duplicity and ingratitude, Augustus also consented to surrender Patkul to Charles, and that unhappy man was taken to Kasimir, where, after remaining for three months fastened by a heavy chain to the

public gallows, he was first broken on the wheel, and then beheaded.

Denmark and Saxony being subdued and his most powerful enemies disposed of, Charles was able to turn his attention to Russia, and Peter, deprived of his allies, found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to maintain the conflict against his formidable foe, alone and unaided. In vain he again solicited the mediation of the Powers; his ambassadors in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and the Hague, met with no success, and, in spite of lavish bribes and specious promises, were unable to persuade any of the foreign ministers to interfere in Muscovy's behalf.

Left thus to his fate and realising the futility of attempting to oppose the Swedish veterans in the open field, Peter decided to retreat further and further inland, burning and destroying the country as he went, and, while avoiding actual encounter with the invaders, as far as possible, to lure them to starvation and death on the frozen plains of Muscovy. The Cossacks of the Dnieper, under their hetman, Ivan Mazeppa, were to be responsible for the defence of the Ukraine, while the Muscovite army, commanded by Sheremetev and Mentchikov, was to maintain a kind of guerilla warfare and harass the enemy at every opportunity.

In January 1708, Charles entered Russia from Poland, intending originally to proceed northwards and recover the Baltic Provinces. But hoping for the co-operation of the Turks and the Crimme Tartars, and tempted by the promises of Mazeppa—who, cherishing the ambition to make himself King of the Ukraine, had, unknown to Peter, turned traitor, and been in communication with Sweden since 1705—he decided to invade southern Russia and to increase his military glory by crushing Peter in the heart of his own country.

In July, at Holowczwn, near the Beresina, Charles won his first victory on Russian soil, after which he

retired to Mohilev, where he waited for reinforcements under Löwenhaupt, who was hurrying from Riga to join him. Holowczwn, however, as it was his first, proved to be his last triumph, for throughout the rest of the campaign misfortune dogged his footsteps at every turn. Löwenhaupt was defeated by a vastly superior force at Lesna, in September 1708, and when he eventually succeeded in effecting a junction with his master, it was with but a handful of men and minus the guns, provision wagons and other stores, on which Charles had been building all his hopes.

The Turks, too, thanks to the astuteness and influence of Count Peter Tolstoi, the Russian ambassador at Stambul, failed to come to his assistance, and finally the treachery of Mazeppa had been disclosed to Peter in the nick of time. When the Hetman joined Charles, it was as a fugitive, with a price upon his head and with barely 2000 Cossacks in his train, instead of as the powerful lord of the Ukraine, with 100,000 cavalry and with all the resources of Little Russia at his disposal.

The winter of 1708 was the hardest experienced in Europe for over a century, and especially severe on the icy plains of the Ukraine. Thousands of the Swedes perished from cold, hunger, and disease, so that by February 1709, Charles' army was reduced from 40,000 men to barely half that number. Their supplies had failed, their communications with Europe had been severed, their gunpowder was ruined by the weather, and most of their guns had been either abandoned or lost. But the indomitable Charles, who shared in all his soldiers' hardships and privations, remained undaunted by these disasters and confident of his ultimate success. He persisted in his advance, for retreat was as foreign to his character as it was contrary to his principles of war.

In May 1709, he commenced the siege of Poltava,

and Peter—who meanwhile had razed Baturin, the residence of Mazeppa, to the ground, and subdued the rebellious Zaporogian Cossacks of the Dnieper—hastened to the relief of the fortress, resolved at last to give battle and to drive the exhausted invaders from the heart of his dominions.

A yet further misfortune now befell the Swedes, for Charles during a reconnoitre, was wounded in the foot by a stray bullet and was so severely injured that he was obliged to superintend operations from a litter, and to resign the command of his forces to Rehnskjöld.

The two armies met on 27th June. At first the Swedes, by their superior strategy, gained the advantage, but weakened by hunger and greatly outnumbered, they began to give ground, till finally, surrounded on all sides by their enemies, and utterly demoralised by Peter's numerous and modern artillery, their infantry was cut to pieces and their cavalry forced to surrender. Marshals Löwenhaupt and Rehnskjöld were taken prisoners, but Charles, Mazeppa, and a small body of horsemen succeeded in making their escape and took refuge in Turkish territory, at Bender on the Dniester, where Mazeppa died a few months later.

The effect of the victory of Poltava on Europe was very great ; the Swedish prestige was as much deteriorated thereby as that of Muscovy was enhanced. The Northern League between Saxony, Russia, and Denmark-Norway was instantly renewed, with this time the inclusion of Prussia ; Stanislaus Leszczynski was ejected from Poland, and Augustus II was restored to the throne ; while, in the course of 1710, the Russians, assisted by the Danes, captured Riga, Revel, Pernau and all the district south of the Gulf of Riga, as well as the important fortress of Viborg in Finland.

The Baltic Provinces and the consequent command of the Baltic Sea were Peter's at last, but peace was not yet in sight, for the defeat of the Danes at Helsing-

borg by the Swedish general Count Stenbock, somewhat turned the tide of battle against the allies, while the Turks, instigated by Charles XII, declared war on Russia at the beginning of 1711.

Relying on the assistance of the Balkan States and still flushed with the triumph of his recent successes, Peter entered on this campaign with enthusiasm, determined to deliver Christianity from the Moslem yoke and to drive the Turks out of Europe. The expedition, however, was uniformly disastrous; the Serbs, Wallachs, and Bulgars failed to rally to the Tsar's support, and in July 1711 the Russian army was beleaguered on the Pruth by a vastly superior force of Turks under the Grand Vizier Baltaji, and, in the forlorn hope of saving themselves from utter annihilation, was compelled to sue for peace, on any terms, at any price. Baltaji, softened by much bribery and the good offices of the Russian envoy Shavirov, offered unexpectedly lenient conditions; and, having agreed to restore Azov to the Porte, to destroy Taganrog and the other Russian fortresses on the Sea of Azov, to abstain from war in Poland and to grant a safe conduct through Russia to Charles XII, the Muscovite Tsar and his army were permitted to withdraw in safety to their own land.

Great was the jubilation of the Russians and equally great the wrath of Charles XII and his ally the Sultan, at this unlooked-for deliverance from what all acknowledged to have been a hopeless situation. The Grand Vizier was accused of treason, deposed from office and exiled to Lemnos, while his successor immediately repudiated the Treaty of the Pruth and once more declared war on Russia, in November 1711. Again the diplomatic abilities of Shavirov, coupled with bribery on a still more lavish scale, averted the danger, while the opportune intervention of England and Holland, in the interests of peace, led to the Treaty

of Adrianople in 1713, which, although it deprived Peter of the Black Sea, finally repaired the breach between Russia and the Porte.

The war with Sweden continued ; but in spite of the efforts of Stenbock, the Swedes, who were enfeebled to breaking point by the long struggle with their numerous enemies, could do but little to defend their territories from the depredations of the Northern League. One by one her German possessions were wrested from Sweden and divided amongst her foes. In 1713, Stenbock was beleaguered at Tönning in Holstein and was compelled to surrender with the remnants of the Swedish army, while Finland, after maintaining a gallant resistance under Karl Gustav Armfelt, was conquered and annexed by Russia in 1714.

Meanwhile, Charles XII had long outstayed his welcome at the Turkish court, and throughout the five years of his retirement at Bender, had considerably taxed the patience of the Porte by constituting himself a centre for the intrigues of all the disaffected in Europe and the East. Deciding at last to return home and resume the conduct of his own affairs, he reached Stralsund in November 1714. But he rejected all negotiations for peace with his enemies and was fanatically determined to pursue the war to a finish, confident of his power to regain his lost possessions in spite of the exhausted condition of his country and his troops, and of the recent addition of George I of England and Hanover to the ranks of his adversaries.

His cause was lost however ; his army could do no more, and Stralsund, his last holding in Germany, except Wismar in Mecklenburg, was captured by the Danes and Prussians in December 1715. The duchy of Holstein-Gottorp was now Charles' sole ally against the united forces of practically all Europe. Even France, hitherto his staunch supporter, had withdrawn her countenance, and, as the outcome of Peter's visit

to Paris in 1715, had concluded a treaty of alliance with Russia and the Netherlands, at Amsterdam, in 1717. Driven from Germany, Charles next attacked Norway, but his death during the siege of Frederikshall in 1718, sealed the fate of Sweden and freed northern Europe from the great disturber of her peace.

Although the war was continued by Charles' sister and successor, the Princess Ulrica Eleonora of Hesse, it was but a feeble effort, and having come to terms with England, Hanover, Prussia, and Denmark by the Treaty of Stockholm, in 1719, the queen was glad also to conclude a final peace with Russia, at Nystadt, in 1721. By this treaty, Russia restored Finland to Sweden, with the exceptions of Viborg and Kexholm, but was confirmed in her possession of the Baltic Provinces and the control of the Baltic Sea. Sweden, deprived of her most important territories, her prestige gone, her credit ruined, sank to the level of a secondary state, whilst Russia, usurping her position, became a great primary power and the chief factor in the politics of the North. By his personal determination and energy, Peter had triumphed over every difficulty, had raised his country from insignificance to power and had transformed the Tsardom of Muscovy into the mighty Russian empire.

At the solemn thanksgiving for the Peace of Nystadt, held at Petersburg, in October 1721, the Tsar was acclaimed by both the Senate and the Synod as "Peter the Great, Father of the Fatherland, and Emperor of all Russia." Thenceforth he was styled "Imperial Majesty," and his title of emperor was at once recognised by all the European Powers; except Austria, who, jealous of her position as the Holy Roman empire, was slow to acknowledge her rival's right to imperial honours.

Peter's worst foes were of his own household. He

had triumphed over his enemies abroad, but at home he was less successful. His domestic circumstances throughout the years of the Northern War were far from satisfactory ; they culminated in the tragedy of his relations with his eldest son, and the death of that son under conditions which have forever branded the father with infamy.

As already seen, the Tsar had repudiated his wife Eudoxia in 1699, and confided the care of her son Alexis, then nine years old, to his sister Natalia, and to various foreign tutors. Under their auspices, the Tsarevitch received an excellent education and developed into a child of exceptional promise, charm, and intelligence. His relations with his father, however, were always unfortunate, for Peter, prejudiced against him on his mother's account, took but little interest in the boy, whom he rarely saw, and always treated with a cold severity that effectually destroyed all natural intercourse and affection between them. Alexis for his part, was devoted to his mother, who, during the impressionable years of his infancy, had lavished on him the only love he had ever known and whose unmerited fate he doubtless deeply resented. Alexis was of a gentle, scholarly, intensely religious temperament, like so many of the Romanovs, and his father's blustering, boisterous ways and ceaseless energy were positive torture to him. He yearned for peace and for the seclusion of a cloister, in preference to the tumult of the Petrine court and world. Imbued with his mother's prejudices and with the obstructive tendencies of the clergy and Raskolniki boyars who formed his most congenial associates, the Tsarevitch, at an early age, became the hope and centre of the reactionary party, the more, that he made no secret of his dislike of his father's innovations and distaste for his father's points of view. Peter, on the other hand, had no use for dreamers. He was determined

to make a soldier and a man of the shrinking, nervous boy, and at the age of thirteen entered him as a private in a bombardier regiment. In this capacity, Alexis was present with the army in Ingria throughout the campaign of 1703, and acquired a vehement aversion to the military profession and everything to do with war.

It was during this campaign that Peter met Martha Skavronskaya, the illegitimate daughter of a Livonian peasant. This woman had been taken into the household of the Lutheran pastor of Marienburg, as waiting-woman to his wife, and eventually was married to a Swedish dragoon, from whom, however, she was parted at the outbreak of the Northern War, and whom she never saw again. During the siege of Marienburg by Sheremetev, in 1702, the beautiful slave-girl, then about eighteen, fell into the hands of the Russian soldiery, and speedily adapting herself to the vicissitudes of her life as a camp-follower, became the mistress of more than one of her captors, and eventually of Sheremetev and other of the Russian generals. In time she shared the tent of the commander-in-chief, Prince Mentchikov, and it was while under his protection that she attracted the notice of the Tsar, who, charmed with her robust good looks and practical commonsense, fell in love with her, and transferred her to his own household.

His wife in all but name and an ideal comrade for the rough and simple Tsar, Martha, although she never attempted to interfere in affairs of state, went everywhere with her lord. She shared his camp life, his long journeys on horseback, his foreign travels, his public receptions, and, it is said, washed his shirts and cooked his meals in the two-roomed wooden cottage which Peter had built for himself at Petersburg. She alone of all his court could soothe him in his moods of fury, nurse him in sickness, and by her

calm good sense, counterbalance his natural impulsiveness. That Peter loved her dearly to the day of his death, and that she reciprocated his affection, is beyond doubt. Knowing no better, she accepted his coarseness, infidelities, and drunkenness as merely human nature, and the *bourgeois* Tsar was more wholly happy with the illiterate Livonian peasant than he could ever have been with a consort in his own rank of life.

Soon after the beginning of her connection with Peter, Martha was baptized into the Greek Church and received the name of Catherine, the Tsar himself acting as her sponsor. In 1705, they are believed to have been privately married, and in 1711, the union was openly acknowledged by a public wedding at Petersburg, in gratitude for Catherine's timely assistance at Pruth, where she is said to have contributed to the deliverance of the Russian army by sending all her jewellery as a present to the Grand Vizier. In 1712, she received the title of Tsaritsa, and in 1724 she was publicly crowned by her husband as Empress of All the Russias.

Catherine bore her husband many sons and daughters, but only two of her children survived their infancy, namely Anna, her father's favourite, who married the Duke of Holstein, and the Tsarevna Elizabeth. Bereft of her own sons, the good-natured, motherly woman, seems to have been uniformly kind to the forlorn young Tsarevitch and often intervened to protect him from his father's wrath, and to mitigate the severities of his lot. It was, perhaps, partly due to her merciful interposition that Alexis obtained a brief respite from soldiering in 1709, and was sent to Dresden, to complete his education in foreign languages, mathematics, and fortification.

While there, he was betrothed, much against his will, to the Princess Sophia Charlotte of Wolfbüttel,

whom he married in 1711. The young couple evinced a mutual respect and liking for each other, which might have blossomed into love had not the bridegroom, three weeks after his wedding, been ordered to join his father in Poland and detained with the army for the next twelve months. In 1713, the Princess Charlotte was permitted to follow her husband to Russia, but again their life together was almost immediately interrupted, for Alexis was sent to Ladoga to superintend the building of new ships. There he acquitted himself so badly and showed such dislike for all his father's schemes, that he was not again employed on public affairs. Peter ceased from further attempts to coerce his son, relapsed into his former neglect of him, and ignored his existence.

Alexis' first child, Natalia, was born in 1714, and in 1715 the birth of his son Peter, followed by the death of the Princess Charlotte, somewhat softened the Tsar's resentment against the bereaved husband. He made one last effort to come to terms with the Tsarevitch, to induce him to amend his ways and to devote himself with a good grace to the public and military duties of his high calling. In a final appeal to his son's self-respect, Peter urged either reform or abdication ; and the craven Alexis, grasping eagerly at any chance of escape from his irksome position, immediately offered to become a monk and to resign the succession to the throne to his infant half-brother Peter, then a few days old. The Tsar's indignation at his son's want of spirit knew no bounds, but he gave him time to reconsider his decision. In 1716, he wrote again from Pomerania, urging Alexis to renounce his life of indolence, to join him and the army without delay, and to assume his proper position as Tsarevitch and as his father's right hand and successor.

Goaded almost to frenzy by these repeated admonitions, Alexis determined to risk everything in one

final struggle for liberty, and under pretence of departing for Pomerania in obedience to his father's commands, to proceed to Vienna, there to claim the protection of his brother-in-law, the Emperor of Austria, from his father's tyranny. Accompanied by only three of his personal attendants, and by his mistress, Afrosina, a young Finnish girl, to whom he was devotedly attached, the Tsarevitch left Petersburg towards the end of September. Although almost out of his mind with terror, at the thought of his probable fate in the event of his detection and recapture by his father's emissaries, he reached Vienna after a circuitous journey, about a month later. The Emperor Charles VI received him kindly, and pitying the panic-stricken youth's deplorable condition, smuggled him and his companions, first to the fortress of Ahrenberg in the Tyrol and eventually to the castle of St Elmo at Naples, where he hoped to provide him with an asylum beyond the reach of the parental arm.

Here the fugitive enjoyed a brief peace, but naturally, his non-appearance in Pomerania had led to the discovery of his flight. Peter rightly concluded that Alexis had taken refuge with his brother-in-law, and, burning with indignation at this open scandal in the eyes of all Europe, demanded his son's extradition from the Emperor's dominions without delay.

Charles VI, who was anxious to protect his young relative, returned evasive answers and prolonged negotiations as much as possible; but when the Tsarevitch's real whereabouts were at last discovered and an invasion of Austrian territory by Russian troops seemed imminent, he was forced to give way. He declined to violate the laws of hospitality, or to allow his guest to depart except at his own wish, but he permitted the Tsar's agent, the cold-blooded, unscrupulous Count Peter Tolstoi, to proceed to

Naples and endeavour to persuade Alexis to return voluntarily with him to Russia. After nearly three months' palaver, Tolstoi, by mingled threats and cajoleries, succeeded in his mission. The Tsarevitch, reassured by his father's written promise to overlook the past, to sanction a marriage with Afrosina, and to permit him to live in retirement on his own estates, consented on these conditions to leave Italy. He reached Moscow at the beginning of 1718.

Then commenced the terrible "Moscow Process," as it was called, when the unfortunate prince, realising too late that his father's promises were but so much waste paper, was hailed before a private tribunal presided over by the Tsar, and tried for his life. Almost out of his mind with fright at finding himself in the clutches of his enemies, Alexis was easily terrified into confessing all sorts of imaginary conspiracies against his father's throne and government, which implicated all his friends and caused the torture and death of many of his supposed accomplices among the clergy and nobles.

Amongst those involved by these wholesale accusations was the ex-Tsaritsa, who, as the object of the veneration of the clergy, was especially obnoxious to Peter, and whom he now determined to degrade in company with all her partisans. Her sympathisers were tortured, slain, or banished, thus effectually suppressing the reactionary-clerical party which Peter regarded as the cause of all his son's insubordination. Eudoxia herself was torn from her convent, accused of adultery with a major Stepan Glyebov, stripped naked, scourged—some say by Peter himself, others by two monks—and then banished to solitary confinement at Ladoga, where she remained till released by her grandson Peter II. Glyebov, tortured in vain, to make him "stain the honour of an innocent woman," was impaled, wrapped in furs to preserve his vitality,

and publicly exposed on the stake, till death put an end to his agony.

In the meantime, Afrosina had arrived in Petersburg from Italy, after her confinement, expecting in accordance with the Tsar's promises, to be at once united to her lover and to live happily for ever after. Instead, she too was confronted by her husband's inquisitors and terrified, like him, into confessing whatever she was told to confess. Finally, under the influence of her alarm, she sealed Alexis' doom by repeating all his confidences to her, in which he had inveighed against his father's tyranny and innovations and announced his intention, when he came into power, of undoing all Peter's darling schemes for the regeneration of Russia, the growth of the navy and army, and the development of Petersburg as the capital of the realm.

At these revelations, Peter, who valued his reforms too highly to face the prospect of their ultimate frustration with equanimity, made up his mind that his son's death was necessary to the future welfare of the nation. Only thus he felt could he preserve Russia from retrogression. He became convinced, and in all human probability, rightly convinced, that Alexis was unfit to succeed to the throne, and that his accession would mean the destruction of all his own hopes and plans for his country's progress. The Tsar, who never spared himself for his people, determined to sacrifice his heir to the national interests, and, in his own vigorous phraseology, to cut off his son " as if he were a gangrenous swelling."

Alexis had already publicly renounced his rights to the throne in favour of his little half-brother Peter, and thereby felt that he had earned his father's clemency and propitiated the Tsaritsa Catherine in his favour. But he was once more brought before his judges at Petersburg, and on being confronted with his mistress' evidence, collapsed into a state of maudlin imbecility,

in which he abjectly acknowledged anything and everything, in the vain hope of saving his life and averting the dread consequences of his father's wrath.

The Tsar, however, was inexorable. In June 1718, in spite of a half-hearted recommendation to mercy from the now servile clergy, the Tsarevitch was condemned to death by the Senate, as a traitor to both the Emperor and the State. First tortured and then knouted, as a means of extracting further confessions of guilt, the unfortunate prince expired a few days later, in the fortress of Peter and Paul, and was privately buried in the presence of his father and stepmother on 30th June.

The exact causes of his death are unknown, but according to the official account issued by Peter for the information of foreign powers and the nation at large, it was due to apoplexy. More probably it was the effect of torture on a constitution never very strong, and at the time greatly enfeebled by hardship and mental strain. The knout, for instance, was a short whip made of strips of sheepskin, boiled in milk and hardened to a blade-like consistency. Every blow of this instrument cut the victim to the bone, so that few survived more than thirty strokes, and many a man died from the effects of three. The Tsarevitch who had received no less than forty strokes, perished, as he was meant to perish, under such inhuman treatment, and his execution at the hands of his unnatural father has left a stain on the name of the great reformer-Tsar, which even his most ardent admirers are unable to overlook. It is probable that Peter honestly believed the death of his degenerate son to be necessary for the good of the empire and to the furtherance of his schemes for the national prosperity; but in permitting this execution, he gratified his own vindictive dislike for the unfortunate young man and earned the condemnation of posterity

by an act which the smallest spark of natural affection would have sufficed to prevent.

The rest of Peter's reign was a period of comparative peace. With the cessation of the Northern War he was able to devote himself unremittingly to internal reform and to the extension of Russian influence in both the East and West.

An attempt to establish commercial intercourse with China failed, but political relations with Europe were much improved. A war with Persia, mainly undertaken to extend the trade of Russia with India and Central Asia, resulted in victory for the Muscovite arms. By the Treaty of Petersburg, Russia acquired several important places on the eastern banks of the Volga, between Nijni-Novgorod and Astrakhan, together with the control of the Caspian Sea by means of Baku and the Caspian Provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Astrabad.

Peter the Great's domestic reforms were many and far reaching, embracing every department of the State and every class of society, with the sole exception of the unfortunate serfs. For them, save for one or two minor ameliorations of their lot, he could do but little, owing to the vastness of his dominions and the scattered nature of the population.

To facilitate local administration and to prevent the oppression of the poor, the urban inhabitants were divided into three classes, each class with its own magistrates, whose duty it was to protect the interests of their community and to provide for the security and well-being of its members. Guilds for the encouragement of arts and crafts were established ; industrial enterprise was promoted ; iron works were founded in various parts of the country ; the manufacture of such commodities as leather, silk, cloth, and paper was increased, and the position of the merchant and artisan was much improved.

Patrician influence, on the other hand, was wisely reduced; the power and privileges of the nobles were made dependent on service and were no longer hereditary as before. All men, however lofty their position, were compelled for a certain number of years to serve the State in some capacity or another, whether civil, military, or commercial. Those who would not work were deprived of their estates and forbidden to marry.

Regardless of the claims of rank, high public offices were conferred as the reward of merit only on those best qualified to occupy them. Among the most remarkable parvenu recipients were Mentchikov, Yaguzhinski the Procurator General and Director of the Senate, Makarov the Tsar's private secretary, and Ostermann, the Foreign Minister and Organiser of the Peace of Nystadt. All these men by their abilities rose from the humblest beginnings to positions of supreme importance and power.

The condition of women was improved. Education became obligatory for girls as well as for boys; compulsory marriages were forbidden, and women were encouraged to mix freely in society and to emancipate themselves from the oriental seclusion of the terem as much as possible. Court receptions on European lines were held by the Empress Catherine in the Summer Palace at Petersburg, while in the hope of inculcating western manners and civilisation, compulsory public *assemblées* were given by each of the great nobles in turn, at which ladies were expected to be present and to assist in the entertainment of the guests.

The Tsar's eye was everywhere. Nothing was too small to be worth his notice, or too great for his colossal energy to undertake. Hospitals, a medical school, picture galleries, sculpture galleries, and museums were founded; a regular police force was

established ; thieves and highwaymen were suppressed ; the coinage, the legal and the fiscal systems were reorganised ; agriculture and the breeding of horses and cattle were encouraged, and such plants as tobacco, the vine, and the mulberry were introduced. To facilitate the internal trade of the country, a widespread system of canals was constructed, connecting the White Sea and the Gulf of Finland in the north, with the Caspian and Black Seas in the south. Imperial edicts dealing with every phase of the national existence, from dress and public morality to sanitation, the prevention of fire, and the building of houses, were issued by this indefatigable reformer, to whom the welfare of the State was dearer than life, or even than his own flesh and blood.

Well aware that Russia's inferiority to her neighbours was mainly due to ignorance and to the shameless corruption which prevailed in every department of the State, Peter did his utmost to remedy these defects, and devoted all his energies to the enlightenment of his people and the improvement of the moral life of the nation. Education became compulsory for all but the peasant class. The children of every public servant were obliged to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, or some craft which should stand them in the stead of literature. Failure to comply with these requirements was punished by enforced celibacy and enrolment in the army for life. None of the children of the gentry might marry without having first attained to a certain standard of education, so that noblemen sent their sons abroad to study and obtained the services of foreign governesses for their daughters. Schools were established throughout the country ; a naval college under English teachers was founded at Moscow ; printing presses increased in number and issued cheap books for the use of schools, together with translations of the classics, manuals of science

and of mathematics, and other works for the use of students. At the Tsar's command, a history of Russia from the beginning of the sixteenth century down to the reign of Peter himself, was written and published by Polikarpov, the director of the printing office, and in 1703, the first Russian newspaper appeared, under the title of *Tidings of Military and Other Events, Worthy of Knowledge and Remembrance*. In 1707, Peter personally revised and simplified the old Slavonic alphabet of forty-eight letters, and introduced the "civil script," as it is called, of thirty-five letters, which is still in use. Afterwards he had his new alphabet cast into type in Holland, and himself corrected the proofs of the first books thus printed.

His next aim was to reorganise and purify the State. To this end he abolished the Council of Boyars and the Zemsky Sobor, and embodied both into the Senate, or supreme governing board, which was thenceforth to be responsible for the national administration. Under the jurisdiction of the Senate, were the governors of the eight provinces of Moscow, Petersburg, Smolensk, Kiev, Azov, Kazan, Siberia, and Archangel, into which the country was then divided for executive purposes; under these again were smaller districts or counties, each with its own governor and council.

In imitation of European bureaucracy, and of that of Sweden in particular, nine "Colleges" or ministries were instituted, to deal with the various departments of state. They were presided over by such men as Mentchikov, Golovkin, Apraksin, and Shavirov; but frequent dissensions between the heads of the different colleges hampered Peter's reforms in this branch of the administration, and the system was not a success.

Nor was the Tsar more fortunate in his endeavour to suppress the speculation which was rife amongst all Russian officials, from the highest to the lowest, in

every department of the State. Although, as already mentioned, a number of surveyors, or "imperial fiscals," had been established, whose duty it was to supervise the administration of each public office and to report on all malpractices that came under their notice, the evil was too engrained to be easily overcome. The system of "Kormlenie," or "nourishment" then prevalent amongst the ill-paid officials of the State, was too ancient and universal to be ever extirpated. The Tsar's most trusted friends and servants succumbed to the common vice, and neither torture nor death availed to eradicate a canker which destroyed the national prosperity and all but depleted the Treasury. Kourbatov, the Inspector of Finances, and Yaguzhinski, the Procurator General, both took bribes. Shavirov, the Vice-Chancellor, was exiled, and Nestorev, the Ober-Fiscal, was broken on the wheel and beheaded, for gross corruption in the execution of their office. Prince Gargarin, the governor of Siberia, was hanged for converting the trade with China to his own use, besides bribing the senators and the heads of the colleges to ignore his depredations. Mentchikov, Peter's favourite and confidant and the worst of these highly-placed marauders, was convicted of vast frauds on the Treasury, which would have cost him his life, but for his master's unalterable affection.

Peter's ecclesiastical reforms were as drastic as his other measures. Although bitterly opposed by the reactionary party, he did much to abolish the abuses in the Church and to exterminate the superstition and religious ignorance prevalent among the people. Many of the monastic establishments were suppressed as superfluous, while the remainder were placed under government supervision, heavily taxed to relieve them of their ill-gotten wealth and compelled to justify their existence by some form of work for the public good. The education of the clergy was enforced,

while, by *ukase* dealing with the indolence and immorality of the clergy and with the religious indifference of the people, Peter endeavoured to promote the spiritual growth of the nation and to strengthen the hands of the Church.

In 1700, the Patriarchate became vacant, but Peter, aware of the hostility of the clergy to his reforms and unwilling to hamper his authority by a rival autocrat in the person of the supreme spiritual head of the nation, refused to fill the vacancy. Instead, he raised Stepan Yavorski, Archbishop of Moscow, to the new office of Superintendent of the Patriarchal See, and later, for the regulation of Church affairs, he established an ecclesiastical College, which eventually developed into the Holy Synod. This secularisation of the Church, however, together with the Tsar's tolerance of all forms of religious dissent (except Judaism) and his appropriation of ecclesiastical funds for public purposes, naturally aroused fierce opposition amongst the clergy, who joined loudly in the popular outcry against foreigners, westernism, and other Petrine innovations. Archbishop Yavorski, renouncing his allegiance, openly preached against his patron ; pamphlets appeared denouncing the emperor as anti-Christ, and rebellions broke out in Astrakhan and other places which were suppressed with difficulty. All testified to the general dissatisfaction.

Peter, however, was not without his champions amongst the more enlightened members of the clergy and laity. Chief of these were Dmitri Touptalo, Bishop of Rostov, and Theophan Prokopovitch, the prefect of the Kiev academy, and later Bishop of Pskov, both of whom greatly assisted the Tsar in his schemes for educational and ecclesiastical reform. A third advocate for the need of wholesale improvement in the temporal and spiritual life of the nation, was Ivan Pososhkov, a self-taught merchant of obscure

origin and author of a remarkable treatise on political economy, entitled *Poverty and Riches*.

The death of the emperor's second son, Peter, in 1719, rendered it necessary to settle the question of the succession without delay. In 1722, the Tsar further increased his unpopularity by the famous decree promulgating the right of the Russian sovereign to nominate his own successor, irrespective of the laws of primogeniture and inheritance. In 1724, the Empress Catherine was publicly crowned with great pomp in the Kremlin at Moscow, after which unheard-of innovation the nation realised with horror that the Tsar meant to ignore the claims of his rightful heir and grandson, the little Grand Duke Peter, in favour of his low-born German wife, about whose origin the less said the better, but whose loyalty and devotion to her husband's cause had earned his undying gratitude and affection.

Despite his numerous infidelities, Peter's real love for his ignorant peasant spouse had never wavered. When towards the end of his reign, she was accused of criminal intercourse with her secretary, William Mons, the brother of Peter's former mistress, Anna Mons, the shock of her supposed unfaithfulness so told on the Tsar, as seriously to affect his health. Mons was tortured and put to death, whilst his head was preserved in spirit and afterwards placed in the Empress' private apartments. But the iron nerve of this remarkable woman survived even this test of her fortitude. Peter soon afterwards recognised the groundlessness of his suspicions and was reconciled to his wife, who seems to have borne no malice and to have forgiven her lord's mistrust as freely as she had forgiven so much else.

Towards the close of the same year (1724), the emperor's health, ruined by excess, began to fail. In January 1725, in the fifty-third year of his age and

the thirty-sixth of his reign, he died, after a brief illness caused by over-exertion and a chill, due to wading up to his waist in the icy waters of the Neva, to rescue some drowning soldiers whose boat had capsized on a sandbank.

In spite of his unbridled passions, his cruelty, his gross immorality, and his almost habitual drunkenness, he was a great man, and is justly regarded by all historians as the father of his people and the founder of Russian greatness and prosperity. He found Russia an insignificant, isolated nation, in a state of almost barbarous ignorance and savagery. He left her one of the foremost among European powers, comparatively civilised, possessed of a standing army, a navy of no inconsiderable strength, an internal organisation run on western lines, and a seaboard whereon to exploit her merchandise. That one man should have accomplished so much in so short a time, is in itself a proof of genius. Although Peter's reforms were too new and too numerous to be assimilated by the nation wholly and at once, he sowed the seed of better things, the full benefit of which was to be reaped by succeeding generations.

CHAPTER VII

PALACE CONSPIRACIES AND THE GERMAN SUPREMACY

1725–1762

PETER THE GREAT left no will ; but though he refrained from actually naming his consort as his successor, his wishes on the subject were well known. Accordingly, immediately after his death, the Empress Catherine was proclaimed Autocrat of All the Russias by a majority in the Senate and by all those who owed their advancement to the late Tsar and his reforms. The reactionary party, headed by the princes Golitsin and Dolgorouki and by most of the nobles and clergy, strove hard to enforce the prior claims of the Grand Duke Peter, in whom, as the son of the martyred Alexis, the hopes of the Old Russians now centred. But Catherine was adored by the army, which supported her to a man, and a prudent policy of conciliation, bribery, and many promises, induced the nation to accept her accession without much demur. The loyalty of the troops was confirmed by the discharge of long-due arrears of pay, as well as by future exemption from the construction of the Ladoga and other canals, which had always been a bitter grievance in the army ; while the people were propitiated by such measures as the reduction of the poll-tax by one-third, by a general amnesty to all political offenders, and by timely concessions to the Cossacks, who in return, undertook to guard the Russian frontiers and to

serve their "great mother" in time of war, without remuneration.

Catherine, who was mentally indolent, took but little part in the administration of her realm. She retired to her own apartments, where she passed her time in drinking heavily and was content to leave the management of public affairs to her late husband's advisers and to a Supreme Privy Council—consisting of Ostermann, Apraksin, Tolstoi, Golovkin, and Prince Dmitri Golitsin, with Mentchikov at their head—which superseded the Senate and exercised all real power throughout her reign.

Mentchikov, at the time of his late master's death, was in disgrace and like to lose his head for converting public funds to his own use. But Catherine had never forgotten that it was under his auspices that she had first attracted the notice of the Tsar; she therefore restored him to favour, loaded him with riches and honours and made him the virtual ruler of the empire, she herself becoming abjectly submissive to his behests. "The Prince," as he was called, thus became omnipotent in Russia, able to promote his friends, to degrade his enemies at will and to give free rein to his insatiable rapacity and boundless ambition. In other respects he governed the country well, and aided by the more upright Baron Ostermann, he loyally pursued the late Tsar's foreign and domestic policy as long as he remained in power.

In consequence, however, of the many and costly reforms of the last reign, the burdens of taxation were great; the Treasury was almost depleted and the smouldering discontent of the people, till then suppressed by the iron hand of Peter I, began to make itself felt. The Church was especially unruly. Theodosius, Archbishop of Novgorod, in particular—who had supported Catherine's election in the hope that she would revive the Patriarchate in his favour—

when he found that his ambition was not to be gratified, was loud in his denunciations of female supremacy and assiduously sowed the seeds of dissatisfaction with the Empress and her ministers. But he and his like were speedily suppressed by Mentchikov, and being convicted of fraud and other nefarious practices, Theodosius was disgraced and sent into exile.

In May 1725, Catherine had married her eldest daughter Anna, to Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein, a nephew of Charles XII. He had lost his duchy to Denmark as the result of the Northern War, but laid claim to the throne of Sweden itself, in opposition to his aunt, the Princess Ulrica. Sweden had joined the Hanoverian Alliance of England, France, Prussia, and Denmark, so that Catherine's apparent support of the Duke of Holstein's pretensions, gave great offence to those Powers and especially to England, which in 1726, despatched a fleet to the Baltic under Sir Charles Wager, to guard the interests of her Swedish ally by sea. Catherine, however, disclaimed all intention of disturbing the peace of northern Europe and addressed a dignified but spirited remonstrance to George I, at this arbitrary conduct. The diplomatic skill of Baron Ostermann prevented a rupture with Great Britain, while he strengthened his country's position by joining the Austro-Spanish League for mutual defence against the Hanoverian Alliance.

Except for the discovery of the straits between Asia and North America, by Vitus Behring, a Dane in the Russian service, the era of Catherine I is in nowise remarkable and as Empress of Russia she left little or no mark on the annals of her adopted country.

Although she was only about forty-two years of age, the Tsaritsa's addiction to strong waters had undermined her naturally good constitution, so that towards the end of 1726, her health began to fail rapidly.

Dropsy set in, her life was despaired of, and the usual intrigues as to the succession once more filled the court with strife.

By the ukaz of 1722, Catherine could appoint her own heir, and supported by Count Peter Tolstoi and by many of the leading nobles, she naturally wished to nominate one of her two daughters to the throne. But popular feeling was averse to a repetition of feminine rule. A reaction in favour of the little Peter had set in, and Mentchikov seeing that his election was inevitable, and anxious to find himself on the winning side when the crisis came, compelled Catherine to sign a document, drawn up by himself, which designated Peter as her successor, with reversion—failing him and his issue—to her daughters in order of seniority. The government of the realm was entrusted to the Supreme Privy Council, with the Duke and Duchess of Holstein and the Tsarevna Elizabeth amongst its members, while Mentchikov was to act as Regent and as guardian to the young Tsar during his minority. Catherine further directed that as soon as Peter ascended the throne, he was to be formally betrothed to the favourite's daughter Maria. In fact, so completely were Mentchikov's interests to the fore in this so-called "will," that many regarded it as a forgery and questioned whether the Empress had had any knowledge of its contents. But owing to its conformity to the known wishes of the people, its authenticity was never contested.

Catherine I died on 16th May 1727; an ukaz issued the same day, condemned Tolstoi and his adherents to banishment for life, with the confiscation of all their property; and Mentchikov, more than ever supreme in Russia, his enemies scattered, his ambitions realised beyond his wildest dreams, assumed the reins of government in the name of the new Tsar.

At the time of his accession, Peter II was eleven

years of age; a well-grown, handsome, manly lad, who had inherited much of his grandsire's quick intelligence, physical energy, and violent temper, with all his father's mental indolence and lack of purpose. His early childhood had been passed in strict seclusion with his sister Natalia, for both children had been kept in the background by their grandfather, who disliked them on their father's account and did his best to deny them all rights as members of the royal family.

Peter's education had been neglected and confided to utterly unsuitable persons in the lower walks of life. Nevertheless his moral training seems to have been excellent and although he could neither read nor write, he possessed a natural gift for languages, we are told, and spoke the French, German, and Latin tongues almost as easily as he spoke his own. Mentchikov's first care was to have the child properly educated and to this end he placed him under the direction of Ostermann, who became his governor and devoted himself entirely to the task of fitting his young master for his high position and future responsibilities.

Peter was apt but indolent, and boylike, a most unwilling pupil. He was passionately fond of hunting and of all forms of outdoor exercise, but loth to devote to study the daily four hours required of him by Ostermann. Nevertheless he became deeply attached to his governor and divided his affections between him and his beloved sister Natalia. She, though barely a year older than her brother, was much his senior in mental development and became Ostermann's great ally and support in dealing with the wayward Tsar.

Their task was rendered doubly difficult, owing to the adverse influence of courtiers who were always at work to wean the youthful monarch from his existing

environment and to raise themselves to power by flattery and by the gratification of his love of pleasure. Chief among these was his young aunt and favourite playfellow, the Tsarevna Elizabeth, then a lovely, fascinating, but frivolous girl of sixteen, who, despite her natural intelligence, shunned books and all serious pursuits, and, like her nephew, cared only for dancing, hunting, and other forms of amusement.

Mentchikov viewed the intimacy between Peter and his madcap aunt with disapproval, and fearing the influence of the Dolgoroukis and of other members of the reactionary party, he removed the boy to the Mentchikov palace in Petersburg, where he surrounded him with his own adherents and sternly bade him attend to his lessons and seek his relaxations in the company of his betrothed, the Princess Maria and her family. Peter had no affection for his prospective bride and he frankly disliked the Regent. But success had made the latter over-confident, and deeming his position unassailable, he made no effort to propitiate the Tsar, whom he treated with scant respect, signing himself "Your father," in his letters, and scolding him and thwarting his wishes at every turn. The high-spirited boy chafed openly at such treatment from the former vendor of pies. More than once, when the Regent had publicly flouted him by countermanding his orders, he sent for the haughty prince and gave him a rating worthy of the Great Peter himself, which should have reminded Mentchikov that the Tsar was growing up and would one day be Autocrat of Russia in fact as well as in name.

At the moment, however, the Regent was all-powerful. He filled the court with his own adherents and sent dangerous rivals such as the Duke and Duchess of Holstein, Yaguzhinsky, and Makarov into honourable exile, well away from Petersburg. From the despatches of foreign ministers, it appears that the

despotism of Mentchikov was greater even than that of Peter I. "*Jamais le feu roi n'a été si fort craint ni si bien obéi, comme l'est Mentchikov*," writes Lefort, the Saxon envoy at the court of Russia, "*tout plie sous lui et Dieu garde celui qui lui resiste*." Nevertheless the dictator's capable administration greatly benefited his country: commerce and industry revived, the revenue increased, and the burdens of taxation were lessened, so that the condition of the people was proportionately improved. The political prestige of Russia was enhanced by her greater internal prosperity, and the Cossacks of the south were further conciliated by the restoration of their republican privileges and by the revival of the ancient office of Hetman, in the person of Apostol, one of Mentchikov's dependents.

Some four months after Peter's accession, the Regent fell ill; so ill that he could take no part in public affairs and his life was despaired of. He recovered at the end of six weeks, to find that the young Tsar, with his court, had flitted to Peterhof, some thirty miles outside the capital, where, freed from the petty tyrannies of his guardian, he was vastly enjoying himself, in company with Ostermann, the Grand Duchess Natalia, the Tsarevna Elizabeth, the Dolgoroukis, and several other members of the opposing faction.

Ostermann had accompanied his master to Peterhof in his official capacity as tutor, but Mentchikov would not listen to reason. Beside himself with indignation at what he regarded as a breach of trust, he sent for the Baron, and by his abusive behaviour converted that once loyal partisan into an implacable enemy. A favourite has no friends and Mentchikov was no exception to the rule. His overbearing manner had alienated all his associates and by his unwise break with Ostermann, he had himself destroyed his last support and sealed his own doom. Flattered and

humoured to the top of his bent by the Dolgoroukis, the Tsar had begun to realise his own omnipotence and to feel not only that Mentchikov was not indispensable, but that his absence from court was infinitely preferable to his presence there.

Too late the once powerful dictator attempted to avert the gathering storm and to conciliate his former ward. His overtures were ignored, his letters remained unanswered, and in September 1727, he was arrested, convicted of treason, condemned to pay a fine of £75,000, and banished to the steppes of Kazan with all his family. In consideration of his failing health, the tears and entreaties of his wife obtained a commutation of this sentence, to exile to his own estates in the Ukraine; but in 1728, his enemies the Dolgoroukis, fearing his return to power, produced fresh accusations against him. He was sent to Berezov, in Siberia, where two years later he died of want and privation and was buried in the little wooden church which he had built with his own hands, to relieve the monotony of his imprisonment.

Peter II had freed himself from the yoke of Mentchikov, but in so doing he had merely exchanged one form of tyranny for another. He fell at once into the hands of the Dolgoroukis, who kept him under close and constant supervision, so that he became little better than their captive and completely subservient to the pernicious influence of the reactionary party. Filling the court and entirely surrounding the Tsar with members of their own family, the Dolgoroukis assumed absolute control of public affairs, while to retain their authority, they openly encouraged Peter to neglect his studies and the duties of his position in the pursuance of his own pleasure. The remonstrances of the Grand Duchess Natalia and of Ostermann were powerless to check the rapid demoralisation of the emperor under such a *régime*. Although his affection

for his sister and tutor never wavered, their influence was soon undermined by the opposing faction, and they were compelled to stand aside and practically to retire from court.

In September 1728, the death of the Grand Duchess of consumption, at the age of fourteen, destroyed Ostermann's last hope of saving his young master from his evil counsellors. Thenceforth he devoted himself to his business as Vice-Chancellor, and unless sent for, rarely, if ever, approached his former pupil.

The chief adherents of Peter the Great and his reformers were thus relegated to the background, while the Tsarevna Elizabeth was also removed from the emperor's path, by the simple expedient of opening the eyes of that naturally moral youth, to the scandalous impropriety of his aunt's conduct. The ex-Tsaritsa Eudoxia, on the other hand, at once the symbol and martyr of the Old Russian cause, was recalled from banishment. There was even some talk of appointing her Regent during her grandson's minority; but her age and infirmities prevented her from taking any active part in public affairs, and having regained her liberty, she was glad to retire to a convent of her own choosing, where she died.

In January 1728, the whole court removed to Moscow, ostensibly for Peter's coronation, which took place with much magnificence in February of that year; but it was in reality the thin edge of the wedge and marked the first blow struck by the conservatives at all that Peter the Great had laboured to establish. The young Tsar hated the sea and disliked Petersburg in consequence, while he infinitely preferred Moscow, with its delightful climate and its exceptional facilities for sport. He, therefore, gladly agreed to the Dolgoroukis' proposal to restore the ancient capital to its former position and to transfer thither the seat of government, the mint, and other public offices.

Other Petrine reforms were likewise overthrown; the army was greatly reduced; the fleet rotted in harbour from disuse and the naval college or Admiralty was discontinued as superfluous. Public business was purposely neglected and anarchy was rampant in every department of the State, while the Dolgoroukis devoted themselves solely to the task of strengthening their own position and of enriching themselves at the national expense.

In November 1729, was announced the approaching marriage of the Tsar with Catherine, daughter of Alexius Dolgorouki, the most rapacious and unscrupulous of all that intriguing crew. But Peter had begun to weary of his subordination to these his latest despots and he made no effort to conceal his distaste for his future bride and her relations. He became moody and ill-tempered, and a rupture seemed inevitable, when he developed smallpox in its most virulent form and died on 30th January 1730, the very day which had been appointed for his wedding. It is said that Alexius Dolgorouki, frantic at the thought of the power thus slipping from his grasp, would have married his daughter to the half-conscious boy, even after death was inevitable, and that when frustrated in that attempt, he tried to force him to sign a will nominating Catherine Dolgorouki as his successor to the throne. But Ostermann, whom the Emperor had sent for directly he became ill, prevented these designs and watched over his pupil till the end, holding the lad's hand in his own for hours at a time and never leaving his bedside till he died.

Indolent, easily led, and lacking in the strength of character necessary for his development into a good ruler, Peter II did much to retard the progress of his country along the path marked out for her by Peter the Great. By identifying himself with the obstructive policy of the conservatives, he nullified his grand-

father's reforms to a certain extent, but fortunately for Russia, his reign was too brief to be permanently detrimental, or to do more than thrust the schemes of the great regenerator into abeyance for the time being. He was lovable, affectionate, upright, and surprisingly free from the vices and depravity of his day. In extenuation of his faults, the facts of his extreme youth and unlimited power must be taken into consideration. Few boys of his age in similar circumstances, but would, like Peter, have chosen the path of pleasure in preference to that of duty and its attendant disagreeables.

Alexius Dolgorouki's shameless attempt to place his daughter Catherine upon the throne, having been contemptuously set aside even by the members of his own family, it rested with the Supreme Privy Council to choose the late Tsar's successor from among the members of the reigning dynasty. Their task was a difficult one, for although by the will of Catherine I, the crown, failing Peter II and his issue, was to revert to one of her two daughters, the eldest, the Duchess of Holstein, had died in 1728, in giving birth to her son Peter Frederich Ulrich (afterwards Peter III), while her sister the Tsarevna Elizabeth, was too notoriously immoral to be acceptable to the nation, besides being, at the time, too much absorbed in her own pleasures to sacrifice her independence for the responsibilities of a throne. Peter, son of the defunct Duchess of Holstein, was barely two years old, so that the Council, dreading to renew the evils of a long minority, decided to overlook the claims of the descendants of Peter the Great and to seek their candidate in one of the two surviving daughters of the imbecile Ivan V, now the sole remaining representatives of the house of Romanov. Catherine, the elder of these daughters, was declared unsuitable, owing to her marriage with the Duke of Mecklenburg, a prince whose brutality and vices had

made him an object of universal detestation. There remained, therefore, only Anna Ivanovna, the second daughter, who in 1710, had been married, for political reasons, to the Duke of Courland. Her husband having died a few days after the marriage—it was said from excess at the wedding festivities—the widowed Duchess had been forced by Peter the Great to proceed to Mittau, her capital, there to take up the government of the duchy under the guidance of the Russian Count Peter Bestuzhev, who was appointed to assist her in the administration of her estates. Courland at that time was a fief of Poland, but Peter the Great had long coveted the province and hoped through the agency of Bestuzhev to establish a firm hold upon it and eventually to annex it to his own dominions.

Bestuzhev, as the real ruler of the duchy, made himself indispensable to the forlorn Princess Anna, who soon succumbed to the attractions of her accomplished minister; and in spite of the remonstrances of the Duchess' family, the liaison between them lasted till about 1716, when Bestuzhev was supplanted in his mistress' affections by the superior charms of Ernst Johann Biren.

This unprincipled adventurer is said to have been the grandson of a groom, and as such, was always ignored by the ancient and exclusive nobility of the Baltic Provinces; but he managed to obtain a minor post at the court of Courland, and by his ability and address speedily attracted the notice of the Duchess, who had him ennobled, made him her chamberlain and finally acknowledged him as her lover. Bestuzhev was disgraced and dismissed, to make room for the new favourite, and the influence of the upstart Count de Biren, as he was called, became paramount with Anna till the day of her death.

His supremacy had been imperilled in 1726, by Prince Maurice of Saxony, an illegitimate son of

Augustus II of Poland, who appeared at Mittau, and in the hopes of obtaining Courland for himself, proceeded to lay his heart and his sword—his sole possessions—at the feet of the widowed Duchess. His gallantry, his good looks, and fascination, completely captivated Anna, who procured his election as Duke of Courland and strove hard to obtain permission from the Empress Catherine I to marry her brilliant suitor. Such a proposal, however, clashed in every way with the interests of Russia and was peremptorily vetoed. Mentchikov was despatched to Courland to insist on the ejection of Prince Maurice, while Anna was left to conquer her disappointment and resentment as best she could. The Prince Charming removed, Biren regained his ascendancy, but his relations with his royal mistress were thenceforth purely platonic; the Duchess not only countenanced his marriage with a Fraulein von Treiden, but remained a warm friend to his wife and a generous benefactress to his children.

Anna was now a tall, corpulent, hard-featured, vindictive woman of thirty-seven, soured by the disappointments, petty humiliations and constant poverty of her early life, but possessed of a dignified carriage, a commanding mien, and much natural shrewdness and commonsense, which stood her in stead of the education she had lacked. She was little known in Russia, but she represented the last remaining link with the Old Russia of pre-Petrine days and her forlorn and impoverished situation would, it was felt, incline her to welcome the crown on any terms and place herself unreservedly in the hands of those who had been instrumental in raising her to power.

At the instigation of Prince Dmitri Golitsin, who aimed at converting the autocracy into an oligarchical government, with himself at its head—a series of secret articles limiting the power of the Empress were hastily drawn up by the Supreme Council; the Duchess

Anna's election received the approval of the Senate, Synod and the nobility and a deputation was then despatched to Mittau, to invite her acceptance of the throne, subject to her ratification of the clauses embodied in the Supreme Council's new constitution.

By these the Autocrat of Russia became a mere puppet in the hands of the Supreme Privy Council, or rather of the ancient native nobility, from whose ranks the twelve members of the Council were thenceforth exclusively to be drawn. The government of the nation and the control of the army were to rest solely with them. Without their consent the monarch could neither declare war nor make peace; neither marry nor nominate the successor to the throne; could not impose new taxes nor confer any office, honour, or estate, nor punish any member of the nobility. Even the royal expenditure was carefully limited, as was the Empress' choice of and authority over her own *entourage*.

When this arbitrary document was framed, Ostermann was absent owing to an attack of gout, but foreseeing that the constitution as it stood was doomed to failure, he refused to countenance its existence by appending his signature, on the plea of his inability to hold a pen. He was seconded in his opposition by his colleague the Chancellor Golovkin, and through the agency of Yaguzhinsky, they managed to convey a warning to the Duchess of the plot against her authority. Yaguzhinsky's complicity in this counter-conspiracy was discovered by Golitsin and he was disgraced and imprisoned; but his message had reached Mittau, and Anna, knowing that she had a powerful faction in her favour, signed the articles in their entirety, fully intending to disown them as soon as she felt herself strong enough to do so.

The opportunity was not long in presenting itself, for the nation as a whole was strongly opposed to a

constitution constructed only to increase and strengthen the ascendancy of the already overbearing nobility. The welfare of the democracy was in nowise considered, the *parvenu* aristocracy of Peter the Great naturally resented the attempt to dispossess it of its power and privileges, while to the bulk of the people, the belief in the omnipotence of the Tsar was almost an article of faith.

The Empress entered Moscow on 26th February 1730, outwardly gracious and submissive to the Supreme Council, but already showing signs by the independence of her actions, of the tempest of revolt raging within her. She was, however, so closely guarded by the emissaries of the Council, that she was unable to obtain any private conversation with her supporters, or even with her sister the Duchess of Mecklenburg. The only way in which the members of the absolutist party could communicate with her was by pinning notes under the bib of her godchild, Count Biren's baby, who was carried up to her room every morning by its nurse.

On the 8th of March, barely ten days after Anna's arrival in Russia, the oligarchical government was overthrown by a successful *coup d'état* under the leadership of Prince Cherkasky, supported by the army and by some 800 of the nobility and gentry. A petition was publicly presented to the Empress, which begged her in the name of her people to assume the prerogatives of her ancestors and to free herself from the unlawful control of the tyrannical Council. Anna, who was in the plot, pretended great astonishment on hearing that the convention she had signed at Mittau had been drawn up without the knowledge or consent of the nation ; but being assured that such was the case, she sent for the obnoxious document and publicly tore it to pieces, amidst the plaudits of the assembled multitude.

Her accession as Autocrat of All the Russias was

immediately proclaimed in Moscow and the provinces ; Yaguzhinsky was restored to honour and his post of Procurator-General, and the Supreme Council was abolished, to give place once more to the Administrative Senate of Peter the Great.

Possibly the Empress at the beginning of her reign wished to conciliate her subjects by an appearance of clemency, for the supporters of the oligarchy were not at first molested and were even given posts about the court and in the new government. But Anna's vengeance was not long deferred, and some weeks after her accession, at the instigation of her evil genius, Count Biren, she suddenly ordered the arrest of all the members of the Dolgorouki family and their trial for high treason. Accused of complicity in the recent plot against the throne and of having attempted the life of Peter II, they were found guilty on both counts and were one and all banished to Siberia, or imprisoned. Catherine Dolgorouki, the late Tsar's betrothed, like her predecessor, the daughter of Mentchikov, was sent to bewail her ruined youth and shattered hopes in the frozen wastes of Berezov. Nor did the miseries of the unhappy family end there, for Prince Vassili Dolgorouki and Prince Dmitri Golitsin had inserted a secret clause in the Convention of Mittau, which stipulated that Biren should not be permitted to accompany his royal mistress to Russia. This insult, the powerful and vindictive favourite neither forgot, nor forgave. So mild a punishment as exile by no means satisfied his thirst for revenge. He was determined on the death of his enemies, and in 1739, he manipulated a fresh trial, which resulted in the torture and ultimate execution of no less than five of the Dolgorouki princes. Prince Dmitri Golitsin was also condemned to death, but the intervention of the Empress commuted his sentence to imprisonment for life in the fortress of the Schlüsselburg, where he died.

The Russian aristocracy fared ill at the hands of their intended victim, for once firmly established upon the throne, the Empress proceeded to exercise the autocracy which had been pressed upon her by the people, with all, if not more than the rigour of Peter I. Anna had no sympathy with the conservatives. Under her vigorous administration, the reforms of the great regenerator were energetically pursued and the country then advanced as rapidly as it had formerly deteriorated under the lax and capricious government of Catherine I and her successor. Petersburg again became the capital of the realm ; the law of primogeniture was abrogated ; the arrears of taxation were exacted ; the discipline of the army was strictly enforced ; a cadet corps or military academy for young gentlemen was established ; the fleet was reconstructed, and to strengthen the hands of the government, the Torture Chamber which had been abolished by Peter II, was once more revived, under the name of " Chancellory of Secret Investigations."

Beneficial though Anna's rule was, in many respects, it became intensely unpopular, partly on account of its extreme severity and largely because of the foreign favourites who governed the country in the Empress' name, to the exclusion of the Russians themselves. The Tsaritsa's naturally suspicious nature had been antagonised against the Russians and against the Russian nobility in particular, by the revolutionary plot at the beginning of her reign, while her long sojourn in Courland inclined her to the customs and people of her adopted land. Although her shrewd commonsense prompted her to retain as her chief ministers, such tried and trusted statesmen as Ostermann, Münnich, Golovkin, and Cherkasky, the two first were Germans, and the German supremacy was further augmented by the Birens, Löwenwoldes, and other adventurers who had followed in her train.

Carl Gustav Löwenwolde was created a count of the Russian Empire and a Grand Marshal of the Empress' household. His brother Reinhold was given command of the new Royal regiment of Ismailovsky Guards, while the two brothers of Count Biren received important and lucrative posts in the army, and Biren himself attained to an omnipotence such as even Mentchikov might have envied. His wealth and magnificence surpassed that of the Empress herself. His apartments in the royal palace were every whit as splendid ; a third of the revenue of the realm was apportioned to his use ; he owned estates in Livonia, Silesia, and the Ukraine ; and, when in 1733, the bribery and influence of his infatuated mistress obtained his election as Duke of Courland, he arrogated royal honours to himself and sat at table with the Empress and the members of the imperial family. The nation groaned under his yoke and writhed in impotent fury at his open and galling contempt for the Russians and everything to do with Russia. Absolutely supreme in the land, he made or unmade whom he would. Knowing himself detested by Russians and Courlanders alike, he surrounded himself with spies and inaugurated a relentless persecution of his detractors, which led to the torture and death of thousands of men and women, whose only crimes were their nationality and their refusal to bow before this low-born German upstart. Makarov, Tatishchev the historian, and Volinski the cabinet minister, all of them servants of Peter the Great and loyal imitators of his zeal for his country's welfare, were amongst those who succumbed to the power of the vindictive favourite. Volinski, who had rashly permitted himself a sneer in Council at Biren's notorious venality, had his tongue torn out and was to have been broken on the wheel, but that at the last moment his sentence was commuted to the loss of his right hand and death by decapitation. The Empress

strove hard to save her faithful minister, but Biren was inexorable. "If he stays, I go," he is reported to have said, and the unhappy woman, bursting into tears, was forced to give way.

The whole court, from the Empress downwards, trembled in servile fear before this mean, rapacious tyrant. Much of the inhuman cruelty which marred the reign and gained for the Tsaritsa the name of Anna the Bloody, was far more due to the savagery of her infamous favourite than to her own barbarity. Not that Anna was wholly free from the ferocity of her race; witness her treatment of the unfortunate Prince Michael Golitsin, who had incurred her displeasure by marrying a Roman Catholic lady in Italy and himself adopting the Latin faith. As a punishment for his perversion, Anna, who was deeply religious, with all the bigoted fervour of her sex, degraded him—an elderly man and a member of one of the proudest families in Russia—to the position of page and court buffoon. On the death of his first wife she compelled him to marry a second, of her choosing, in the person of a hideous Calmuck woman of peasant origin. The wedding took place publicly with much mock pomp and pageantry and the couple were then escorted to a house built of solid blocks of ice and furnished with ice, where, being stripped naked, they were shut up for the night in a room and on a bed of ice, to perish presumably of cold.

Like Biren, Anna took a malicious pleasure in humiliating the Russian nobility and reduced them for the most trivial offences to the rank of her court fools, in which capacity they were forced to perform all kinds of grotesque and puerile antics for the amusement of their mistress and her foreign favourites. Such was the fate of Count Apraksin, who, like Prince Golitsin, had embraced Roman Catholicism; while Count Volhonsky was degraded to the position of keeper

of the Empress' white rabbit, because the superior attractions of his wife had excited the royal jealousy.

The repulsive troop of fools and dwarfs which formed so prominent a feature of the court was at that time, it must be remembered, a recognised luxury of the great in Russia. Coarse and brutal in her tastes though she was, the Tsaritsa was capable of much good nature and kindliness of heart, as well as of loyal and generous friendship, when once her affections were involved. Her extravagant love of dress and pageantry was perhaps her greatest weakness and is said to have cost the country enormous sums of money and to have all but ruined such of her courtiers as attempted to emulate their royal mistress' passion for display. But in other respects she improved the tone of her court, both in manners and morals, and rendered it far purer and more refined than that of any of her predecessors. Despite the laxity of her early days, in later life she became a rigid observer of the proprieties and saw to it that her ladies were no less particular. Even the Tsarevna Elizabeth was compelled to amend her ways, for fear of being relegated to a convent.

Nor did the political prestige of the nation suffer at Anna's hands. Under the able guidance of Ostermann, Russia played a leading part in the affairs of Europe, and her friendship, once despised, was now courted by all the Great Powers.

The political scene had changed in the preceding five years. In 1729, Spain had deserted the Austro-Russian League for the Hanoverian Alliance, thus leaving the two empires to combine in mutual defence against the rest of Europe. France, averse to this union, as prejudicial to her interests in the East, strained every nerve to separate the allies, to overthrow Austria and to embroil Russia with Sweden and Turkey. Towards the end of 1732, the question of

the Polish Succession provided her with the opportunity she required and once more lit the flames of war in northern Europe.

Augustus II of Poland was an old man, and speculations as to his heir became the leading diplomatic problem of the day. The Elector himself urged the claims of his son, the future Augustus III, while France supported those of the former king, Stanislaus Leszczinski, whose daughter Maria had married Louis XV in 1725. Both parties endeavoured to obtain the co-operation of Russia, as the Power most nearly concerned in the fate of Poland, and huge bribes were showered on Biren, with a view to purchasing his interest with the Empress Anna.

Augustus II died in 1733, and the Poles preferring a ruler of their own faith and race to the German Augustus III, and doubtless influenced in their decision by French gold and promises of French assistance, elected Stanislaus Leszczinski to be their king. Russia and Austria, unable to permit the intrusion of France into the politics of the North, refused to recognise the new monarch and war was declared in September 1773. Austria engaged France on the Rhine, while Russia sent an army under Peter Lacy to invade Poland.

This Lacy was an Irishman from County Limerick, who had been exiled from his native land after the rebellion against William III. He had entered the Russian army under Peter the Great and having served with distinction all through the Northern War, was now governor of the Baltic Provinces and one of the Tsaritsa's most capable and trusted generals. Entering Poland, he captured Warsaw, Thorn, and other towns of importance, and then invested Dantzig, where Stanislaus and his chief supporters had been compelled to take refuge, pending the arrival of the promised succour from France. The Dantzigers maintained a

stout resistance and the Russian army was greatly reduced, so that the siege was prolonged until March 1734. Lacy was then reinforced by Marshal Münnich, the creator of the Ladoga Canal, a *protégé* of Peter I and at that time commander-in-chief of the Russian forces.

The Dantzigers still held out and in May the eagerly awaited French assistance appeared in the shape of three regiments of infantry, under the command of Count de la Motte Perouse. But so small a force was, of course, utterly unequal to the task of relieving the beleaguered garrison. The Frenchmen were defeated by the Russians and compelled to surrender almost immediately after their arrival. They were sent as prisoners of war to Petersburg, where the Tsaritsa seems to have treated them with the utmost kindness and consideration, even to the extent of providing every man with a fur-lined coat, as a protection against the unaccustomed cold.

Deprived of their last hope of external aid, the city of Dantzig capitulated unconditionally, after a siege of five months. King Stanislaus succeeded in making his escape in the disguise of a peasant, but Potocki the Polish Primate, Poniatowski the Palatine of Mazovia, and Count Monti, the French envoy, were all captured and sent as prisoners to Thorn ; while, as the penalty for sheltering the Tsaritsa's enemies, the Dantzigers were made to pay a heavy indemnity. Stanislaus fled to France and after the fall of Dantzig the War of the Polish Succession practically flickered out, to be finally terminated by the Treaty of Vienna, in 1738, and the recognition of Augustus III as king.

Austria meanwhile had suffered severely on the Rhine and was glad to make peace with France towards the end of 1734, and the latter Power, foiled in her attempt to establish a footing in Poland, devoted all her energies to diminishing Russian ascendancy by

inciting Sweden and Turkey to make war simultaneously on their powerful neighbour.

In Turkey, the machinations of France were successful and led to a declaration of hostilities in July 1735. But in Sweden, a treaty of amity with Russia was signed towards the close of the same year ; the pacific councils of Count Horn and the good offices of Great Britain having prevailed over French intrigue and the warlike ardour of those who burned to recover the Baltic Provinces and to avenge the defeats of the Northern War.

Ever since the disaster on the Pruth, in 1711, a rupture with Turkey had been inevitable. Bearing this in mind, the Tsaritsa, in 1733, had concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with the Porte's arch-enemy, the Shah Nadir of Persia, in return for her restoration to Persia of the costly and unprofitable Caspian provinces acquired by Peter the Great. Anna, therefore, felt herself strong enough to commence hostilities against the Ottoman empire as soon as a favourable opportunity occurred and she entered on the new war with high hopes of success.

The control of the expedition was given to Münnich, with Lacy as his second in command, and the two marshals dividing their forces, invaded Turkish territory in the spring of 1736. Both were successful in their objective. Lacy captured Azov after a siege of six weeks, while Münnich stormed and took the lines of Perekop, a row of strongly defended earthworks extending across the neck of land which joins the Crimean Peninsula to Russia. Münnich then penetrated into the heart of the Crimea itself, drove the Turks and Tartars before him and ravaged the country as he went. He was eventually joined by Lacy as prearranged. But disease, fatigue, lack of provisions, incipient mutiny among the troops and finally, dissension between the leaders of the expedition,

hampered the advance, and in August, compelled the Russians to withdraw into their own land.

In April 1737, Münnich again took the field, the most important event of this second campaign being the siege and capture of Ochákov on the Bug, in July. But once more provisions failed, sickness devastated the troops and the Russian general was again obliged to retire and to take up his winter quarters in the Ukraine.

By this time, both sides had suffered severely and being desirous of peace, they endeavoured to come to terms at Nemirov, on the border, in 1738. But Turkey declined to accept the proposals of Russia, so that the negotiations ended abortively and led to an immediate renewal of hostilities with the Porte and to a growing coolness between the allied empires of Austria and Russia, which were mutually dissatisfied with each other's conduct of affairs.

The campaign of 1738 was marked by misfortune and by an outbreak of plague, which reduced the Russian army from 60,000 men to barely half that number. But in August 1739, Münnich completely defeated the Turks at Stavuchanakh, near Khotin on the Dniester, after a fierce battle which has been celebrated in an ode by Michael Lomonósov, a poet and scientist of peasant origin, who flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Having completed his victory at Stavuchanakh by the capture of Khotin, Münnich crossed the Pruth in September, entered Moldavia and proceeded to invest Jassy. There, however, his triumphal progress was stopped by the unwelcome news that Austria, weary of her continued ill-success in Transylvania, had deserted her ally and concluded a separate peace with Turkey at Belgrade.

Exhausted by her previous efforts and unable to continue the struggle alone, Russia was compelled to

follow suit without delay and to agree to terms of peace, which although honourable, were no compensation for the immense losses in men and money that she had sustained in the course of the last four and a half years. She retained Azov and a small strip of territory at the mouth of the Don, but the Crimea and the rest of Münnich's conquests were restored to Turkey, while Russia further bound herself to dismantle Taganrog and to withdraw her ships from the Black Sea.

Nevertheless, her military prestige had been much enhanced and her victories over the hitherto invincible Turks established a wholesome dread of the Russian arms, which led to a complimentary embassy being sent to Petersburg from China and to increased political and commercial intercourse with that exclusive nation.

The Duchess of Mecklenburg had died in 1733, leaving one daughter, Anne, then fifteen years old, whom the Tsaritsa immediately adopted and brought up as her own child. The youthful princess, though good-natured, seems to have possessed neither beauty nor brains, but the Empress became tenderly attached to her niece and intending her from the first to be the mother of the future Tsar, had her carefully educated and betrothed to Prince Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick, while both were still in their teens. The latter, a worthy but uninteresting youth, was sent to Petersburg and also educated under the Tsaritsa's auspices ; but he seems to have found no favour in the eyes of his intended bride, who preferred the more mature charms of the handsome Count Lynar, at that time Saxon envoy to the court of Russia.

The Tsaritsa, however, would listen to no objections. Count Lynar was dismissed and in 1739, the Princess Anne was safely married to Prince Anthony and in the autumn of the following year became the mother of the

ill-fated Ivan VI. The baby prince was immediately removed to the Empress' own apartments and the latter's cup of joy was then full. But her happiness was short-lived, for six weeks later she was seized with an apoplectic fit, from which she never recovered. She lingered a few days and died on 28th October 1740, bequeathing her throne to her great-nephew, the infant Ivan and, against her own better judgment, but in response to the favourite's urgent entreaties, appointing Biren to be Regent during the child's minority.

No objections were raised to the accession of Ivan VI, but Biren's usurpation of the Regency provoked a storm of protest throughout the land. All classes revolted against a renewal of the foreign supremacy, or Birenovstchina, as it was called, which had oppressed the nation for the past ten years. Civil and military riots in various parts of the country testified to the popular indignation and all parties united against the hated favourite, whose position nevertheless seemed unassailable. Prince Anthony, whom Biren openly despised and neglected, complained bitterly, and with some cause, at his total exclusion from the government of his son's realm ; while the Princess Anne likewise resented her subordinate position and feared and disliked the Regent, whom she had never forgiven for having some years previously endeavoured to strengthen his own authority, by marrying her to his son, who was a mere child, at least ten years her junior.

Many eyes turned towards the Tsarevna Elizabeth, hoping that she would come forward and champion the national cause, but engrossed in her own sensual pleasures, she declared her conviction that love was more desirable than a crown and declined to imperil her liberty and ease by embroiling herself with the powerful Regent.

Private jealousy accomplished what party intrigue

failed to compass and Biren's regency was short-lived. Anne confided the tale of her woes to the sympathetic ear of Münnich, whose ambition was only equalled by his inordinate vanity and who himself nourished a grudge against Biren for having failed to include him in the new government. The Marshal thereupon determined to destroy the favourite and to raise himself to power by trading on the gratitude of the liberated princess. In the dead of night, on 18th November 1740, Münnich entered the bedroom of the sleeping Regent, overpowered him after a desperate resistance and, despite the tears and entreaties of his wife, carried him off, enveloped in a quilt, to await his trial at dawn. Early next day he was convicted of treason by a special council, stripped of his possessions and with his family banished to Pelym, in Siberia, for life, while a similar fate befell his two brothers and all his adherents.

A redistribution of power ensued; the Princess Anne became Regent for her son, with the title of Grand Duchess, while her husband, Prince Anthony, was appointed Generalissimo of the Russian forces. Münnich was made chief minister and Ostermann High Admiral and minister for foreign affairs.

In the course of the next few months, Münnich enriched himself at the national expense to much the same extent as his predecessor Biren, but he quarrelled with his colleagues, offended the Regent Anne, and by his unwarrantable interference in foreign affairs, impaired the work of Ostermann and the political prestige of Russia on the continent. The War of the Austrian Succession had just begun and the bribes of Frederick II of Prussia induced the Marshal to exert all his influence on behalf of that monarch, in opposition to the Regent, who had determined to support the claims of Maria Theresa. Enraged at this check to his schemes, Münnich tendered his resigna-

tion, which, to his intense surprise and chagrin, was at once accepted and he was obliged to retire into private life. Ostermann, meanwhile, reassumed control of affairs and avoided further European complications by maintaining the strict neutrality of Russia as long as he remained in power.

The national rejoicings at the destruction of the Birenovstchina proved to be premature, for the Regent was a dull, indolent woman of no ability or charm, who threw herself into the arms of worthless foreign favourites and once more filled the court with German dependents of her own choosing. Openly bored with her husband, she welcomed the return to Russia of her early admirer, Count Lynar, and masked her intrigue with the Saxon envoy, by marrying him to her inseparable friend and confidant, Julia Mengden, a young German woman of obscure birth, for whom the Regent had developed a romantic attachment.

Such a state of things could not last long. The nation seethed with discontent and the crisis was hastened by Anne's unwise jealousy of the Tsarevna Elizabeth, whom she endeavoured to remove from court by urging either a marriage with Prince Anthony's elder brother the Duke of Brunswick, or retirement to a convent, then the accepted lot of all unmarried Russian princesses who were no longer in their first youth.

Neither course appealed to the sybaritical Elizabeth, who, as long as she had been free to enjoy her life in her own way, had shown no desire to concern herself with affairs of state. Now that her liberty was threatened, she took alarm and at once responded to the suggestions of those who pressed her to put herself at the head of the nationalist party and, relying on her popularity with the army and the people, to overthrow the existing government and seize the crown for herself. La Chétardie, the French envoy, who hoped to

further his country's interests by placing the Tsarevna upon the throne, took a leading part in these intrigues, so that before long Elizabeth found herself involved in treasonable relations with France and Sweden, both of which offered to support her cause, in return for substantial rewards as soon as she should have assumed the crown.

Ostermann suspected the conspiracy and warned the Princess Anne, but the latter was too indolent to institute any real inquiries as to the truth of his accusations and merely scolded the delinquent, who soothed the Regent with tears, kisses, and protestations of innocence, and instantly resumed her negotiations with La Chétardie. For long Elizabeth hesitated; but events moved at a pace which compelled her to cast her scruples to the winds and to strike before she herself was overwhelmed by her intended victims.

Towards the close of 1741, at the instigation of France, the "Hats" or military party in Sweden (as opposed to the "Night-caps" or pacifists), declared war on Russia, ostensibly in support of the Tsarevna's claim to the throne, but in reality to regain the Baltic Provinces and other territories annexed by Peter the Great.

The event forced Elizabeth's hand, as La Chétardie intended it should, and fearing to be suspected of complicity with the enemy, she dallied no longer. Lestocq, her French physician, seems to have been the prime mover in the bloodless revolution which followed, and with him were associated Alexis Razumovski, the two Shuvalovs, Elizabeth's gentlemen-in-waiting, Voronzov, her chamberlain, and Schwartz, her secretary—all erstwhile lovers of the volatile princess and all eager to improve their own fortunes by raising their mistress to power.

An appeal to the army met with an enthusiastic response and at midnight on 5th December 1741,

the Tsarevna, donning a cuirass under her military cloak, sallied forth through the snow at the head of the imperial guards and arrested the Regent and her family in their beds. All the ministers of the late government, including Ostermann and Münnich were apprehended at the same time and at dawn next day Elizabeth was proclaimed as Empress and Autocrat of Russia. The rejoicings were universal, for apart from the beauty and good nature which had endeared her to the people, she was the last representative in the direct line of the house of Romanov and was regarded as the deliverer of Russia from the hated German yoke.

The fate of Ivan VI and his family was sad, for although Elizabeth wished to treat them kindly, she feared to set them at liberty lest they should become a centre of disaffection and a danger to the throne. Bandied from pillar to post for some time, the infant emperor was finally imprisoned in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, where he remained till his death in 1764, while his parents were sent to Kolmogori on the shores of the White Sea. There, in a common wooden hut, they lived the life of peasants and after giving birth to three more children—two sons and a daughter—Anne died in 1746. Her husband survived her for thirty years and her children continued to dwell at Kolmogori till released by Catherine the Great in 1780. It is said that they were loth to quit their desolate home ; they dreaded contact with the world of which they knew so little and entreated Catherine to leave them where they were. But their petition was refused and they were pensioned and sent to Denmark.

Julia Mengden was likewise exiled, while Ostermann, Münnich, Golovkin, and Löwenwolde were tried by special council on the usual charges of treason. On being convicted, they were condemned to mutilation and to death by decapitation ; but on the scaffold itself,

their sentence was commuted to banishment for life, for Elizabeth, to salve her conscience, had sworn to shed no drop of blood in the course of her ascent to the throne. Ostermann, who was an old man, crippled by gout, was sent to Berezov, where he died in 1747—Münnich went to Pelym, to the very house lately vacated by Biren, who was recalled and permitted to reside at Yaroslavl. The two enemies are said to have met and coldly bowed as they passed each other on their journey, Biren travelling south and Münnich going north to spend his dreary days in rearing fowls and vegetables.

For the last quarter of a century, civilisation in Russia had been at a standstill, but the advent of Elizabeth to the throne inaugurated a period of progress and of national independence, such as had not been since the days of Peter the Great.

The new Empress was thirty-two years of age, vain, frivolous, extravagant, and so indolent that state papers lay untouched, awaiting her signature, for weeks at a time. But she was genuinely patriotic and although possessed of her father's sensuality and vindictive cruelty, she had inherited his powers of will and brain, as well as his insight into character and his faculty for putting the right man in the right place.

She chose her ministers with discrimination, but a violent reaction against foreign influence having set in, she ousted all alien officials from their posts and replaced them by natives of equal ability and more zeal for the welfare of the country. Ostermann and Münnich were removed as has been seen, but Count Michael Bestuzhev, one of Peter I's Russian collaborators, was retained and his younger brother Alexis rose to be chancellor and chief minister.

Official corruption, ignorance, drunkenness, lawlessness and vice still prevailed, but the new administration strove hard to remedy the national evils, to

promote commerce and agriculture and to improve the mental and moral conditions of the people. Like her predecessor the Empress Anna, Elizabeth, despite her own laxity of life, was strict where others were concerned, carefully guarded the virtue of the ladies of her court and forbade men and women to mix in the public baths.

Too idle to study, Elizabeth maintained that reading was injurious to her health, but she fostered literature and art, founded the first Russian university at Moscow and an Academy of Fine Arts at Petersburg. She also improved and beautified the capital, where she caused the Italian architect Rastrelli to erect the Winter Palace, while she furthered the development of drama, by encouraging such writers as Sumarokov and Kniazhnin and by permitting Volkov to open a theatre at Petersburg under her protection.

Like many of her sex, Elizabeth was priest-ridden and grossly superstitious, interlarding a life of shameless immorality with long fasts, prayers, and constant pilgrimages to shrines and monasteries, where she might venerate the relics of the saints. Although indefatigable in pursuing her father's civil and military reforms, she undid much of his work in connection with the Church by allowing the clergy to regain entire control of ecclesiastical affairs and to inaugurate a relentless persecution against the Raskolniki and all forms of dissent.

One of Elizabeth's first acts after her accession, was to summon to Russia her nephew Carl Peter Ulrich of Holstein Gottorp and to proclaim him as her heir. Peter was then fourteen years old, a coarse, boorish, pock-marked youth, of no intelligence, few virtues, and an unlimited capacity for dissipation and drink. His education having been neglected, the Empress provided him with tutors and did her best to improve his mind, and in 1745, at the suggestion of the then

friendly King of Prussia, she married him to the sixteen-year-old Princess Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst, who, on her reception into the Greek Church, received the names of Catherine Alexeievna. In 1753, one son, Paul, was born of this union, but the marriage was an unhappy one, for the ill-conditioned Peter was no match for his brilliant and charming wife, whose intellectual superiority he resented and whose determined love of all things Russian, was diametrically opposed to his own fanatical admiration for Germany and Frederick the Great. Uncongeniality deepened into active dislike and the ill-assorted couple drifted further and further apart. Peter spent his time in sordid amusements of the most puerile description, while Catherine devoted herself to studying the language, manners, and customs of the country she was destined one day to rule. The Grand Duke took no part, nor interest in the administration, but not so his quickwitted wife, who soon gave proofs of her statesmanlike abilities and also, it must be confessed, of her capacity for intrigue. Identifying herself with the interests of the nationalist party, she became the centre of a powerful faction which aimed at placing her upon the throne in opposition to her stupid German husband, and knowing herself well-fitted for the crown, she lost no opportunity of preparing herself for the position she eventually meant to assume.

For long Catherine resisted the evil influences of her corrupt environment, but the example of the Tsaritsa, her husband's indifference, and her own loneliness broke down her resistance. In her twenty-fifth year she succumbed to the attractions of Sergius Saltikov and embarked on the career of unbridled licence which has so deeply stained her name. Saltikov, Count Poniatowski, Gregory Orlov—by each of whom she is supposed to have had a child—followed each other in rapid succession. But although Peter is said to have

complained to the Tsaritsa of his wife's amours, in reality he seems to have countenanced them, as justifying his own liaison with Elizabeth Voronzov, the Chancellor's niece and a sister of Catherine's intimate friend the Princess Dashkov.

The Empress Elizabeth's own lovers were many, of brief duration and generally drawn from the lowest ranks of society. Alexis Razumovski, her last and greatest favourite, to whom she seems to have been really attached, was the son of a Cossack innkeeper. He obtained a place in the imperial choir at Petersburg and attracted the notice of the music-loving princess as much by the beauty of his voice, as by his good looks. On Elizabeth's accession, he was created a Marshal and a Count, and in 1742, at the instigation of her confessor, she is believed to have married the handsome Cossack, though the union was never acknowledged. To please her husband, the Empress summoned many of his relatives to court, and nominated his brother to the vacant Hetmanship of the Zaporogian Cossacks; but, unlike other royal favourites, Razumovski remained unspoilt by his aggrandisement, frankly confessed his ignorance of military and other public matters and made no effort to increase his wealth or power by interfering in affairs of State. Lestocq, on the other hand, Elizabeth's French physician and earlier lover, regarded himself as a born diplomatist and believed that he had been chiefly instrumental in placing the Tsaritsa on the throne. He meddled with foreign affairs at every opportunity, took bribes from foreign powers and finally, in 1748, being detected in treasonable correspondence with France and Prussia, he was put to the torture and banished to Siberia.

French intrigue was especially active throughout the reign, for an alliance with the growing power of Russia had become of paramount importance to the

various European states concerned in the War of the Austrian Succession. The contest begun in 1741 between Russia and Sweden, still continued, and was regarded by Swedes and French alike, as the chief factor in the revolution which had placed Elizabeth upon the throne. Relying on the representations of La Chétardie, the Swedes had hoped for large concessions of territory in return for their support of Elizabeth, but in spite of her French proclivities, the Empress had no mind to part with her father's conquests at the bidding of Versailles. She pursued the war therefore, and under her generals Lacy and Keith gained several victories in Finland, till Sweden was crushed and obliged by the Treaty of Abo in 1743, to cede southern Finland to Russia and to acknowledge the Tsaritsa's ally, Adolphus-Frederick of Holstein Gottorp, as heir to the Swedish throne.

French intrigue in Sweden had failed, but nothing daunted, La Chétardie redoubled his efforts to draw Russia into the Franco-Prussian alliance against Austria. He had all but succeeded, when his enemy, the Chancellor Bestuzhev, found means to tamper with his correspondence and thereby exposed not only the machinations of France and Prussia and the treachery of Lestocq, but also the fact that the letters referred to the Tsaritsa and her frailties in terms which that lady never forgave. La Chétardie was ordered to quit the capital within twenty-four hours and Elizabeth's incipient partiality for Frederick the Great turned into a deadly hatred which lasted till her death and seriously imperilled his position.

She at once declared in favour of Maria Theresa and sent an army under Repnine into Austria in support of her new ally. But before hostilities were commenced, the war was terminated by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, and, for the time being, Elizabeth was forced to postpone her revenge.

In 1756, Russia formed an alliance with England, but the compact was complicated by a treaty between Great Britain and Prussia in the same year and on the outbreak of the Seven Years War (1756–1763) the Tsaritsa renounced the union to join the Franco-Austrian coalition against her arch-enemy of Prussia.

Early in 1757, a Russian army under Apraksin entered Prussian territory and severely defeated the forces of Lewald at Gross-Jaegersdorf; but instead of pursuing his victory, Apraksin immediately withdrew across the Niemen. On inquiry, he was found to have been suborned by the Chancellor Bestuzhev and the Grand Duchess Catherine, who were opposed to the war as injurious to the national interests. Apraskin was recalled and soon afterwards died of apoplexy, Catherine narrowly escaped imprisonment and Bestuzhev was replaced by Voronzov and sent to live on his own estates.

The conduct of the war was then entrusted to Fermor, a foreign general of English birth, who, in 1758, captured Königsberg, Thorn, and other places and laid siege to Kustrin. Being routed by Frederick the Great at Zornsdorf, he was replaced by Peter Saltikov, who defeated the Prussians at Paltzig, entered Frankfurt and almost annihilated the enemy at Künersdorf in 1759. After this disaster the Prussian army was reduced from 48,000 men to barely 3000, so that for the remainder of the war Frederick was obliged to maintain a strictly defensive attitude and to avoid open encounter with the enemy as much as possible.

In 1760, the Russians overran Pomerania and under Todleben, entered and ravaged Berlin, but the death of the Empress Elizabeth in January 1762, put an end to the war as far as Russia was concerned and saved Frederick from further humiliations.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ERA OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

1762–1801

On the death of his aunt, Carl Peter of Holstein ascended the throne and, thanks to the good influence of his secretary Volkov, surprised all by the conciliatory nature of his early acts. Unfortunately for himself, this wise policy was short-lived. Amongst other beneficent measures, corporal punishment for military officers was forbidden ; the nobles were exempted from the obligatory state service imposed upon them by Peter the Great ; the Torture Chamber was again abolished and the Raskolniki and other dissenters who had suffered so severely in the last reign, were assured of protection and induced to return to Russia. Even the unhappy serfs were included in the imperial manifestoes and many political exiles were recalled and restored to honour, of whom Münnich and Biren were the most conspicuous. Both were now old men of over seventy, but the former was made governor of Esthonia and Livonia, and died at Riga in 1767, while Biren was restored to his duchy of Courland in 1763, and lived till 1772.

Peter the Third's pro-German tendencies, which, during Elizabeth's lifetime, had necessitated his total exclusion from the administration, were at once apparent and he lost no time in establishing amicable relations with Frederick the Great, to whom he habitually referred as " the King my Master," with other

expressions of equal servility and respect. Repudiating the league with France and Austria, the Tsar at once concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia, which involved the unconditional surrender of all his predecessor's conquests, together with such substantial aid in men and money as would enable Frederick to continue the struggle with his enemies.

Regardless of Russian interests, Peter, at his idol's instigation, declared war on Denmark, hoping to recover the dependency of Schleswig, which had been lost to Holstein during the Northern War. He further exasperated the army by the introduction of German uniforms and German discipline, as well as by the preference given to his Holstein troops over the native regiments and even over the imperial guards.

Determined it would seem on self-destruction, the Emperor alienated the clergy by his religious indifference and by transforming all Church property into Crown lands, in return for a fixed annual income paid to ecclesiastics by the State. He also offended the nobility by attempting to model his court upon that at Berlin, as well as by the grossness of his private life and his brutal treatment of his wife.

Catherine meanwhile, had enlisted popular sympathy as much as Peter had estranged it, and won universal admiration by her discretion and ready tact. The pupil of Voltaire and other French philosophers of the time, she was at heart no less irreligious than her husband. But she charmed all by her outward piety and strict observance of Orthodox rites and lost no opportunity of identifying herself with the spirit and interests of her adopted country. Her partisans were numerous and powerful and when it became known that the Emperor proposed to divorce his wife, to marry his mistress Elizabeth Voronzov and to nominate the ex-Tsar Ivan VI as his heir, to the exclusion of his own

son Paul, the adherents of Catherine felt that it was time to act.

Disgusted at Peter's incapacity and folly, the nation longed for his eclipse, but popular feeling was divided on the subject of his successor. One party desired to place Catherine upon the throne, while the other favoured the elevation of the Grand Duke Paul, under the regency of his mother. Catherine's ambition, however, brooked of no secondary position. She knew that nothing but the crown would satisfy her and she determined to seize it for herself.

In conjunction with the Orlov brothers, Count Panin her son's governor, Princess Dashkov, Prince Baryatinski, the Metropolitan of Novgorod and other influential members of the Church and State, she planned her husband's overthrow and early on the morning of 9th July 1762, a brief but successful *coup d'état*, engineered by her supporters and the imperial guards, placed her upon the throne. The Emperor, who was at Oranienbaum, some few miles outside the capital, refused at first to credit the news, but when he heard that Catherine was advancing against him with a large force, he went to Kronstadt, intending to put himself at the head of the garrison there and crush the rebellion. He was, however, denied admission by Admiral Talysine, who held the fortress for the Empress; and finding himself deserted by his followers Peter returned to Oranienbaum. There he was arrested by Catherine's troops and compelled to abdicate in her favour, without a single hand or voice being raised in his behalf. He was sent to Ropcha, a remote village outside Petersburg, and there a few days later he was strangled by Alexis Orlov, probably by order of Catherine, though this has never been proved. According to the official proclamation issued by the Empress two days after the murder, " the late Emperor departed this life by permission of

Almighty God, in consequence of a colic, complicated by apoplexy."

Strange to relate, the early policy of Catherine II differed little from her husband's, for although she had obtained the throne through the agency of the Old Russian party, she considered herself under no obligation to act at their behest. At no time in her life, indeed, did this strong-minded woman brook any interference with her political schemes. Regarding her ministers merely as the instruments of her will, she was a law unto herself and one of the most autocratic sovereigns who ever wore the Russian crown. Of her many favourites, Potemkin was the only one who attained to any ascendancy in the realm. Although Gregory and Alexis Orlov were permitted a share in the government, Catherine's other lovers were nonentities, who contributed to the pleasure of their royal mistress, but who took no part in public affairs.

The Tsaritsa's mental and physical energy as well as her capacity for work was enormous. She rose at five every morning and devoted often as many as fifteen hours a day to affairs of State, every department of which she personally superintended, rather than delegate her authority to a subordinate. Belief in her own omniscience and ultimate success supported her through every difficulty, for great as were her abilities, her vanity and self-confidence were even greater, and there was no problem connected with the administration of her vast dominions with which she felt incompetent to deal. In spite of her foibles and her German birth, Catherine II was genuinely patriotic, more Russian than the Russians and exclusively devoted to the welfare of her people and to the aggrandisement of her empire. Imbued with the doctrines of Peter the Great, she aimed at the development of Russian resources by extending her borders on all sides ; and she succeeded so well in her endeavours,

that by the end of her reign she had added some 560,000 square miles to her dominions.

The Tsaritsa's first act after her accession was to recall the troops from Germany, thereby seriously endangering the position of Frederick the Great and contributing indirectly to the Treaty of Hubertsburg which terminated the Seven Years War. She also published a manifesto, denouncing the King of Prussia as the enemy of Russia and of the world at large. But she had no personal grievance against Frederick, whose political aims coincided too closely with her own early ambitions, to permit of any real estrangement between them.

A common desire for plunder drew them together. Augustus III was failing fast and already in anticipation of his death, Catherine and Frederick had begun to plan that partition of Poland which has been stigmatised by historians as the foulest crime in the annals of Europe. In 1763, Catherine, regardless of other claimants, restored Biren as already mentioned, to the vacant duchy of Courland. She thus paved the way to the annexation of the province, which, under Biren's worthless son Peter, was finally effected in 1795.

Augustus died in 1763, and the ensuing strife as to his successor completed the ruin of Poland, already weakened by the endless internal and external wars of the last half century. At the head of the two great rival Polish factions of the time, were the influential families of Potocki and Czartoryski ; while the former appealed to France and Austria to support the claims of Prince Charles of Saxony, who was their candidate for the vacant throne, the latter solicited the intervention of Prussia and Russia on behalf of one of their own number, Count Stanislav Poniatowski. Catherine, glad of an opportunity to assist her former lover and at the same time to harass the Southern Union, obtained

the election of Poniatowski, who speedily became a mere puppet in her hands and the ultimate cause of Poland's extinction as an independent nation.

The new king, although enlightened and well-intentioned, was weak and utterly unfit to cope with the anarchy and internal dissensions of his country. Some few much-needed reforms he did attempt, but he was not strong enough to effect them single-handed, and Catherine having resolved to destroy Poland, was opposed to any measure calculated to arrest the general decay. Stanislav's hands were further tied by the constant and pernicious interference in Polish affairs of his powerful neighbour. When soon after his accession, a religious civil war broke out between the Confederates of Radom, or Dissidents, as they were called, and the conformist Confederates of Bar, Catherine, on the plea of upholding toleration, at once sent her troops under Repnine, to assist the former party and incidentally to establish Russian supremacy in Poland at the point of the sword. Having thus introduced the thin edge of the wedge, the Tsaritsa was able to turn her attention to her own affairs and devoted herself to securing her position on the throne of Russia.

Serious riots at Petersburg and Moscow had already disturbed her peace of mind, and in 1764, her apprehensions were further aroused by a conspiracy headed by one Mirovitch of the Guards, to release the captive Ivan VI and restore him to the throne. Ivan was now a physically fine young man of twenty-four, but deprived from his earliest infancy of companionship, education and all the ordinary blessings of life, his mental development had been checked and he was practically imbecile. Tooke, a contemporary historian, reports that " he was never brought out into the open air and no ray of heaven ever visited his eyes. It was necessary to keep a lamp always burning in his subterranean vault and as no clock was either to be

seen or heard, Ivan knew no difference between night or day. His interior guard, a captain and a lieutenant, were shut up with him and there was a time when they durst not speak to him, not even to answer him the simplest question." His gaolers, moreover, had orders to slay him instantly at the slightest attempt at rescue or escape and they obeyed their instructions, with the result, that when Mirovitch and his fellow-conspirators entered the dungeon, the captive lay dead before them. To prevent imposture, the body was exposed to the public view and then privately interred. Mirovitch was beheaded, but his behaviour during his trial and his confident expectation of a reprieve, even upon the scaffold itself, gave rise to the suspicion that the Empress had instigated the plot, with a view to removing a dangerous rival from her path. There seems, however, to have been no grounds for this hypothesis, which probably emanated from Catherine's enemies and obtained little credence amongst her contemporaries.

The Empress's only possible, legitimate rival was her son Paul, a stupid, surly, uncouth lad of eleven years, for whom she entertained an aversion which she was at no pains to conceal. Doubts have been cast upon his paternity, for scandal called him the son of Catherine's early lover, Sergius Saltikov, while even Catherine herself is said to have entertained the possibility of his being a changeling, substituted for her child at birth by the Empress Elizabeth. But the prince's extraordinary resemblance both in feature and character to his putative father Peter III, renders both these suppositions improbable. His mother had him carefully educated ; but she kept him entirely in the background and subjected him to a strict surveillance which effectually prevented him from becoming a danger to the throne. Paul was twice married ; in 1772, to Princess Augusta of Hesse Darmstadt, and on

her death three years later, without issue, he wedded Dorothea Sophia of Wurtemberg, in 1776. His liberty and allowance were still restricted however; the courtiers openly neglected and despised him, and even his right to the society of his own children was denied. His two elder sons, Alexander and Constantine, while still in their infancy, were removed from the care of their parents and brought up by the Empress, who lavished on them all the love of a naturally affectionate disposition. She taught them, played with them, wrote stories for them, and boasted of their precocity and beauty like any other grandmother in a lower walk of life.

With Ivan VI dead and the Grand Duke Paul a political nonentity, Catherine's security was assured. She was supreme in Russia and faithful to her early motto, "I must reign or perish," she remained so till her death.

In 1764, she felt herself strong enough to complete the secularisation of Church property begun by her husband and planned by Peter the Great. She thus finally subordinated the Church to the State and increased the wealth of the Crown by nearly a million serfs and much land. The monks and the clergy were annually indemnified according to their rank for the loss of their property, and the surplus revenue was devoted to various philanthropical institutions, such as hospitals and orphanages.

This system of transferring serfs with the land they occupied, by deed of gift or of sale, from hand to hand, was a crying abuse of the time and one which the Empress was, at first, genuinely anxious to remove. Serfs were still the property of their respective master, to do with as he would; they were forbidden by law to voice their sufferings, to escape from bondage, or even to marry without their owner's consent. In 1766, a Free Economic Society was formed in Russia, with a

view to solving the problem of serfdom and an open prize for the best essay on the subject was offered, which was won by Beardé de L'Abbaye, of Aix-la-Chapelle, who advocated emancipation. Some few members of the Society likewise proposed the enfranchisement of the serfs, especially Korbjin, an officer of artillery. But the majority, including Gregory Orlov, Princess Dashkov, and the Archbishop of Rostov, were averse to any measure so obviously detrimental to the interests of the nobility. On the principle that " as the canary must be caged, so the peasant must be kept in bondage," they maintained that in servitude, not in liberty, lay the truest happiness of the slave.

In 1767, a Legislative Assembly or Council was convoked, to reform the laws and to deal with all questions connected with the government of the realm, that of serfdom included. Six hundred and fifty deputies, representative of every race, creed, province and class in the empire—the serfs only excepted—met at Moscow and held more than two hundred sittings, nearly all of which the Empress attended in person. She also inaugurated the Council's career with the famous " Instructions " drawn up by herself and containing the most democratic and liberal sentiments culled from the works of Montesquieu and Beccaria. She afterwards scattered copies of this plagiaristic composition broadcast through all the courts of Europe, to the mingled admiration, anger, and amusement of contemporary monarchs.

The assembly sat for nearly a year and did much to regulate and improve the national organisation. But while various privileges were accorded to the nobles and to all classes of the urban population, the lot of the serfs, save for one or two minor ameliorations, remained untouched. With feminine inconsistency, Catherine herself increased the evil at different times during her

reign, by converting some 800,000 free peasants into serfs, for the benefit of her favourites.

Like her predecessor and prototype Peter the Great, she made strenuous efforts to suppress the inveterate corruption still prevalent in every branch of the executive. But her edicts were robbed of their efficacy by the fact that her favourites cost the nation annually some millions of roubles, while her personal extravagance almost equalled that of Elizabeth Petrovna.

Inconsistent though her government often was, when her own wishes were involved, Catherine's foreign policy was resolute enough. She never lost sight of her determination to enlarge her empire and to render Russia foremost among European powers.

Already her influence was supreme in Poland and her word law in the Diet of that State. Hampered by the presence of the Russian troops in his territories, in 1767, King Stanislav obtained their recall, but only at the cost of a treaty whereby he undertook to permit no change in the Polish constitution without the consent of Russia and to restore the " Liberum Veto " which he had attempted to abolish. As by this system no act could pass the Diet without the unanimous consent of the members, legislation in Poland was almost at a standstill and Catherine by insisting on its restoration, under pretence of promoting liberality of thought, had in reality destroyed all hope of reform and hastened the dissolution which she had in view.

In the following year, a further insurrection of the Confederates of Bar, renewed the civil war and compelled Stanislav again to appeal to Catherine for assistance. Soon afterwards the Cossacks and " Haidamacks " or brigands of the Ukraine, rose in revolt against their Roman Catholic oppressors, and encouraged by the Orthodox priests, inaugurated a merciless crusade against all heretics. Under Gonta, the Cossack chief, a terrible massacre of Poles and Jews

took place at Uman, a town belonging to Count Potocki, and although Gonta was eventually captured and executed, the rising was suppressed with difficulty and not before the provinces of the Dnieper had been completely laid waste.

In spite of surreptitious assistance from France and Austria, the Confederates of Bar were defeated and dispersed. Many of them took refuge at Constantinople, where, aided and abetted by the French ambassador Vergennes, they endeavoured to induce the Porte to take up arms against Russia, in support of Polish independence. Turkey, always Poland's staunch ally and alarmed on her own account at Russian aggressions in the Baltic States, was nothing loth. War was declared in 1768. But the power of the Ottoman empire was already on the wane and Catherine's generals were everywhere victorious, in spite of the obligation to maintain an army in Poland and the consequent numerical inferiority of the Russian forces in the south. By the end of 1769, Golitsin had overrun Moldavia, Wallachia, Bessarabia, and part of Bulgaria, captured Khotin and reconquered all the territory won by Münnich in 1739; the Grand Vizier was defeated by Rumantsov at Kagoul in 1770, and in 1771, Dolgorouki ravaged the Crimea and finally destroyed the Turkish rule in the peninsula.

By sea, Catherine was no less enterprising and successful. A fleet commanded by Alexis Orlov, assisted by Spiridonov and by the Englishmen, Elphinstone and Grieg, sailed round Europe from the Baltic Sea, and entering the Aegean captured the island of Chios and utterly annihilated the Turkish navy off Tchesmé on the coast of Asia Minor, in 1771. An anti-Turkish rising among the Orthodox Greeks of Morea, acting in concert with the Russian fleet, had failed, owing to want of cohesion, but the victory of Tchesmé rendered

Russia mistress of the Grecian Archipelago and opened up the way to Constantinople itself. The alarm of the Turks was great, but instead of pursuing his advantage, Orlov wasted his time endeavouring to organise the Greek insurgents. When he finally decided to abandon them to their fate and to enter the Bosphorus, he found that the Dardanelles had been strongly fortified against him and he was compelled to give up the attempt. The truce of Fosciani in the summer of 1771, afforded a welcome respite to both belligerents and gave Catherine time to deal with difficulties nearer home.

Her successes against the Turks had disquieted the Powers and were especially obnoxious to Austria, who feared her close proximity in the Balkan States and the establishment of Russian supremacy in the East. Prussia, moreover, jealous of the growing domination of Russia in Poland, likewise assumed a menacing attitude and Catherine saw herself threatened with a war against all Europe, which she was in no condition to maintain.

To restore the balance of power, it was suggested by Frederick the Great that Russia should renounce her Turkish conquests and compensate herself for her losses by wholesale annexations of Polish territory, in which, however, Austria and Prussia were to participate. To these terms Catherine was reluctantly compelled to submit. The first partition of Poland between the three Powers was accomplished towards the end of 1771, and Russia thereby regained "White Russia" and most of the country beyond the Dnieper which had been lost to Muscovy during the fourteenth century. Catherine gained much, but not all that she had hoped, namely, the appropriation of Poland in its entirety as a vassal state. This first partition may therefore be regarded as a diplomatic triumph for Frederick the Great, who, by associating himself with Austria, had

forced Catherine's hand and obliged her to divide the spoil she had regarded as solely her own.

The war with Turkey was renewed in 1772, with further triumphs for Catherine, but in 1774, a final peace was concluded at Koutchouk-Kainardji, by which the Sultan agreed to cede Azov, Kinburn, and the district lying between the Bug and the Dniester, to Russia, to recognise the independence of the khans of the Crimea and Giorgia in the Caucasus, to pay a large indemnity and to grant free access and trading rights on all Turkish waters to Russia's mercantile marine.

Successful though Catherine was abroad, the early years of her internal administration were fraught with difficulty. She needed all her courage and resource to meet the dangers which beset her path. Pretenders to her throne, Raskolniki opposition to feminine rule, popular insurrections, and tribal revolts were of frequent occurrence. In the summer of 1771, the general unrest was increased by an outbreak of plague at Moscow, which, during the months of July and August, destroyed the population at the rate of hundreds a day. The superstitious ignorance of the people hindered all efforts to check the spread of infection, and when the enlightened Archbishop Ambrose endeavoured to enforce sanitary and common-sense precautions upon his panic-stricken flock, he was murdered for his pains. The troops and even artillery were necessary to disperse the rioters and eventually Gregory Orlov was sent to deal with the situation and to quell the tumult.

Gregory Orlov had occupied the position of chief favourite for nearly eight years and was the father of Catherine's only recognised illegitimate son, Alexis Count Bobrinski. But the Empress had begun to tire of her lover's merely external charms and there were many who regarded his mission to Moscow as significant of her desire to rid herself finally of his

presence. Gregory, however, miraculously escaped the infection and, aided by the advent of cold weather, his efforts prevailed. The plague ceased, quiet was restored to the city and the favourite returned to Petersburg in triumph, to renew temporarily his ascendancy over the Empress, till finally ousted from her affections by Vassiltchikov in 1772.

In 1773, the national disaffection culminated in the insurrection headed by Emilian Pugatchev, which speedily developed into a peasants' war of the most brutal type and led to wholesale massacres of the nobility and gentry in eastern Russia. Pugatchev was an illiterate Don Cossack, who had escaped from a Siberian prison and traded on a fancied likeness to Peter III, to proclaim himself as that monarch saved from Ropcha and marching to Petersburg to dethrone his wife and elevate his son the Grand Duke Paul in her stead. His pretensions met with ready support among the lawless tribes of the Volga, as well as among the serfs, refugees, and other malcontents of that district. He soon found himself at the head of a large army, with which he terrorised the eastern provinces by a merciless slaughter of all landowners and their families and gained possession of Kazan and several other cities of importance. The soldiers sent against him, deserted to his side, declared his enemies guilty of high treason and executed them with the utmost barbarity, while the pretended Tsar was accorded imperial honours by his adherents and issued proclamations abolishing serfdom and announcing the peasants' right to slay their masters and appropriate their possessions.

Encouraged by his success, Pugatchev began to plan a march on Moscow, where the 100,000 serfs there resident would undoubtedly have hailed him as their sovereign and deliverer and have added to the general anarchy. But a series of defeats by Count Alexander

Bibikov destroyed the pretender's prestige and suppressed the insurrection before it had time to assume the dimensions of a national revolution. Deserted by his followers, who had wearied of their own and their leader's enormities, Pugatchev fled to the forests between the Volga and the Jaïk, whither he was tracked by the imperial troops under Suvarov. He was eventually betrayed into the hands of his enemies and carried in an iron cage to Moscow, where in 1775, he was publicly executed with almost medieval cruelty, by order of the resentful Empress.

The Tsaritsa had been seriously alarmed by this rebellion and she proceeded to stamp out the spirit of revolt in her dominions with ruthless severity. She continued her reforms, but her zeal for the democracy had been destroyed. The humane principles which she professed at the beginning of her reign, gave place to a deep-rooted mistrust of the lower classes, which accounts in some measure for the little done under her government to right the wrongs of the oppressed peasantry.

Resolved to rid herself of the lawless and semi-independent tribes of southern and eastern Russia, Catherine's first measures were directed against that hotbed of disaffection, the Zaporogian Setcha of the Cossacks of the Ukraine. In 1775, the republic was destroyed and its members were relegated to the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, or forced to take refuge under the banner of the Sultan. A similar policy in the region of the Volga, freed the Empress, at last, from the restless element which had so long disturbed the peace and prosperity of the nation.

To people these unhabited but fertile provinces, Catherine had recourse to foreign colonists, whom she attracted to her dominions by grants of land and by promises of civil and religious liberty. These settlers were mostly Germans from the Palatinate, or Moravians,

and other religious sects, driven by persecution from their own land. They speedily converted the desolate steppes into populous and cultivated districts and under the auspices of Catherine herself and of her famous minister Potemkin they founded numerous cities, such as Ekaterinburg and Ekaterinaslav, some of which still flourish.

Vassiltchikov had given place to Potemkin in 1774, and for the space of two years the latter was the Empress's husband in all but name. Potemkin, who was in his thirty-fifth year and ten years Catherine's junior, was, unlike most of her favourites, a man of great ability and strength of character. On the cessation of his *liaison* with his royal mistress in 1776, he preserved his ascendancy over her mind and realm and practically ruled the nation in her name, till his death in 1791. His extravagance and venality are said to have cost the country annually something like £250,000, to say nothing of the jewels, palaces, lands, serfs, and other perquisites acquired in the course of his long administration. But he participated in Catherine's love of literature and art, as well as in her schemes for the reform and development of her empire. Even after her passion had abated, cooled by her lover's frequent infidelities, the Empress remained genuinely attached to him and always retained him in her confidence. Nikita Panin, Voronzov, and Bezborodko were her chief ministers and directed the foreign affairs of Russia with consummate skill, but Potemkin continued to be the dominant factor in the politics of his country. He was the head of the army, of the navy, and of the court, as well as the controller of the royal affections, in that he supplied his mistress with a constant succession of favourites, carefully selected from among his own creatures.

Through Potemkin's influence, amicable relations were resumed with France, which continued till

1791, when the outbreak of the French Revolution alienated the Empress's sympathy with the liberal tenets of the French philosophers and temporarily interrupted diplomatic intercourse between the two countries. As became the disciple of Diderot and the Encyclopædists, the boasted friend of Madame Geoffrin, the correspondent of Voltaire and of Baron Grimm, Catherine professed an ardent admiration for the learning and arts of France and strove to disseminate French civilisation throughout her own dominions. But with characteristic inconsistency, she entertained a strong political aversion to the French nation, whose intrigues in the North and East she never ceased to mistrust.

Her friendship with Frederick the Great having somewhat cooled towards the latter half of her reign, the alliance with Prussia gradually gave place to an understanding with the Southern League. This led in 1779 to the Congress of Teschen, when France and Russia mediated successfully between Austria and Prussia on the subject of the succession to the vacant electorate of Bavaria.

The following year, Catherine again interfered in the politics of Europe. Supported by Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal, she issued a protest on behalf of the mercantile marine of those Powers, against the constant violation of maritime law by Great Britain, then at war with America, France, and Spain. In her famous declaration of "Armed Neutrality" in 1780 the Tsaritsa upheld the inviolability of neutral vessels in time of war and the right of such vessels to trade along the coasts of belligerent nations. She thus originated principles which are still observed in modern warfare and dealt a severe blow to the maritime supremacy of the British Isles. England was naturally averse to this curtailment of her prerogatives, but her hands were too full to permit of resistance, and in 1781, the treaty was ratified by all the Powers.

Catherine's alliance with Austria led to a warm personal friendship with Joseph II, which was furthered by an identity of interests in Turkey and by a visit of the Emperor to Russia, *incognito*, in 1780, to discuss the problems of the East and the future of the Crimea.

At the Tsaritsa's suggestion, embodied in the celebrated "Greek Project," Turkey was to be dismembered and the ancient Byzantine empire revived, with Constantinople as its capital and with Catherine's grandson, the Grand Duke Constantine, as its head. Austria was to annex the Turkish provinces adjoining her own borders, while the independent kingdom of Dacia, comprising Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bessarabia was to be created, to act as a buffer state between Austria, Russia, and Turkey, and to be ruled over by a sovereign professing the Orthodox faith. Joseph II agreed to these propositions, but demanded a larger share of the spoil for himself. He thereby obliged Catherine to moderate her ambitions and to renounce her hopes of attaining to sole supremacy in the East.

The Crimea and the Kuban or Caucasus were annexed by Catherine in 1783. The Porte protested loudly at this infringement of territory and threatened war, but hostilities were averted by the pacificatory efforts of France and the Sultan was compelled by the Treaty of Constantinople to agree to the incorporation of both provinces with the Russian empire.

Re-christening the peninsula by its ancient name of Tauris, the Empress nominated Potemkin to be its first governor, with the title of Prince of the Taurid, and the latter at once set himself to hide the desolation of the former Tartar khanate under a veneer of civilisation. As if by enchantment he converted the uncultivated plains of the Crimea into the granary of Russia. He launched a fleet upon the Black Sea, founded the towns of Kherson and Sebastopol, and, promoting Ekaterinaslav to be the capital of the new

province, he erected numerous public buildings within its walls, which included churches, schools, libraries, a university, a theatre, several manufactories, and a palace of more than oriental magnificence for himself.

Four years later, Catherine undertook her famous triumphal progress through southern Russia, to inspect her new possessions; but in the words of Prince Tcherbatov, "the Empress looked without seeing." She was accompanied by the Emperor of Austria, Stanislav of Poland, several of the foreign ambassadors and by her grandsons the Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine. But the two last were too young to stand the fatigues of such an expedition and the Grand Duke Constantine having developed measles, both children were left behind before they had accomplished more than a few days' journey.

The Tsaritsa expressed herself as delighted with all she saw. Deceived by the evidences of prosperity carefully prepared for her by Potemkin, by the apparently flourishing towns and villages along her route and by the glories of Ekaterinaslav, she failed to realise that such rapid progress must necessarily be but superficial and proof rather of Potemkin's thaumaturgical instincts, than of any real improvement in the condition of the people. The journey deluded none but herself, whilst its ostentation and the triumphal arch erected in her honour over the eastern gates of Cherson, inscribed with the words "this is the road to Byzantium," gave great offence to the Porte, already alarmed by Catherine's aggressions in the East and at the political significance of her friendship with Austria.

Spurred thereto by the political ambitions of England, Prussia, and Sweden, Turkey declared war in the summer of 1787; Sweden seized the opportunity to follow suit on her own account in 1788, in the hopes of regaining Finland, and Austria took up arms on behalf

of Russia. Taken by surprise, Russia was ill-prepared to cope with a war in the north and south at one and the same moment, while Potemkin, knowing the fragility of his newly erected fortresses and of the Black Sea fleet, was in such despair that he even suggested the evacuation of the Crimea. Catherine's fortitude, however, rose to the occasion. "With courage," she wrote to him, "all can be repaired, even a disaster," and her letters to her generals at this time are among the most spirited of her literary compositions.

The military genius of Suvarov and Rumantsov carried all before it. The important fortresses of Otchakov and Khotin were captured in 1788; the Turkish armies were defeated at Fosciani and Rymnikski in 1789; Potemkin took Bender and overran the province of Bessarabia, while Laudun, the Austrian commander, conquered Serbia and sacked Belgrade. Ismail, a strongly fortified position on the Danube, fell before Suvarov in 1790, and a series of successes by land and sea threatened the security of Constantinople and obliged the Turks to sue for peace. Owing to the deaths of Joseph II and of Potemkin in 1791, to the withdrawal of Austria, the outbreak of the French Revolution and to renewed complications in Poland, Catherine was glad to conclude peace at Jassy in 1792, She thereby retained Otchakov, the Crimea, and the northern shores of the Black Sea, but she restored the rest of her conquests to Turkey, under pressure from England and Prussia, who feared the predominance of Russia in the East.

The war with Sweden had been brief and inconclusive and terminated in the Peace of Verela in 1790, without gain or loss of territory to either side. The Russians under Admiral Grieg, won the naval victory of Hogland in 1789, to be in their turn defeated by sea in the battle of Svenka-Sund in 1790; but a revolt of his subjects in the same year and the hostility of Denmark, com-

pelled the Swedish king Gustavus III to devote himself to the internal condition of his own country and to relinquish the struggle with Russia.

Two years later he was assassinated by Ankerström at a masked ball in Stockholm and was succeeded by his son Gustavus IV. Catherine, who was anxious to strengthen the newly-formed alliance between the two countries, effected the betrothal of the young king to her grand-daughter, the Grand Duchess Alexandra. But at the last moment, on the very day when the wedding was to have taken place and when the court had already assembled for the ceremony, Gustavus IV refused to sign the marriage contract and abruptly quitted Petersburg without any explanation of his strange conduct. Intercourse with Sweden was immediately broken off, but the Empress's death occurring soon afterwards, no further steps were taken in the matter and it was left for her grandson, Alexander I, to avenge the affront to his family and empire.

All this time, hampered by the wars with Turkey and Sweden, the Tsaritsa had been unable to protect her interests in Poland, where Prussia had attained to pre-eminence under pretence of assisting Stanislav Poniatowski in his attempts to reform the anarchical constitution of his country. After the Treaty of Jassy, however, Catherine set herself to recover her supremacy. She refused to sanction the new constitution and sent her troops into the Ukraine in support of the Confederates of Targovitsa, or Polish malcontents who objected to the abolition of the *liberum veto*, the curtailment of aristocratic rights, the liberation of the serfs, religious toleration, and to the other reforms which Stanislav had striven so hard to effect. The latter relying on the alliance with Prussia, appealed to Frederick William III for help. But that monarch treacherously denied his obligations and having secretly concluded a treaty with Russia, he invaded

Poland, nominally to restore order, but in reality to co-operate with the former Power. Stanislav and the Polish patriots, deserted by all their allies, were defeated by the united Prussian and Russian troops in 1792, and the second partition of Poland by her despoilers was accomplished in the same year. Helpless in the hands of their conquerors, these depredations were ratified by the Polish Diet in the " silent session " of Grodno, in 1793, when the members, after maintaining a dumb resistance for nearly three weeks and refusing to utter the words which should legalise the spoliation of their country, were finally forced to do so at the point of the Russian swords.

A great national rising followed in 1794, under the heroic Thaddeus Kosciusko. But in spite of his efforts and of the desperate bravery of his followers, the Poles were ill-equipped, outnumbered and utterly unequal to the task of opposing the combined forces of Russia and Prussia, now reinforced by Austria, intent on sharing in any future booty that might accrue. Cracow succumbed to the Prussians, Warsaw was sacked by Suvarov, and in October 1794, the Polish army was almost annihilated at Maciejowicé on the Vistula. Kosciusko being wounded and made prisoner in the battle, was sent to Petersburg, where he languished in prison till released by Paul I. With his overthrow, the national cause was doomed ; in 1795 Stanislav resigned his crown and was sent to Grodno, while Poland, partitioned for the third time between Russia, Austria, and Prussia, ceased to exist as an independent state. Thus Catherine united to her empire all the territory, except Galicia, once ruled over by the descendants of Rurik.

The rest of Europe was now involved in an anti-revolutionary conflict with France, but Catherine, although violently opposed to the Revolution, contented herself with exhorting the Powers to unite

against the anarchy in the west, whilst she seized the opportunity to pursue her own schemes unmolested in the east.

The Shah of Persia having invaded the Russian protectorate of Giorgia and burnt Tiflis, Catherine declared war against him in 1796. This was done largely to please her latest favourite, Plato Zoubov, a youth nearly forty years her junior, with whom she was deeply in love, and who, in his double capacity of Field-Marshal and Minister for War, burned to distinguish himself in some military enterprise. The command of the expedition was given to his younger and still more inexperienced brother, Valerian Zoubov, but the death of the Tsaritsa from apoplexy in the autumn of the same year, put an end to the campaign, and on the accession of Paul I the troops were at once recalled.

Catherine II died in the sixty-seventh year of her age and the thirty-fourth of her reign, having stamped her strong personality not only upon the history of Russia, but on that of all Europe as well. On 17th November 1796, while still apparently in full possession of her health and faculties, she was struck down and was found lying insensible upon the floor by one of her servants. Although she lingered a few hours, she never completely recovered consciousness, nor spoke again.

She was a great ruler and her right to that title rests not so much upon her enlargement of her empire, as upon her diplomatic talents and the liberality of her domestic policy. Her mental gifts outweighed her virtues and many of her internal reforms, like those of Peter the Great, were hampered by the faults of her own character and by the malpractices of her worthless favourites. But she was genuinely interested in the welfare of her people and, save that she failed to improve the condition of the serfs, she accomplished much in the national behalf.

Although most of her financial reforms were nullified by the extravagance of her court and by the luxury and cupidity of her numerous favourites, the Tsaritsa, as already shown, reformed the laws and the fiscal system of the land, increased the revenue, encouraged commerce and agriculture, colonised and cultivated the waste places of her empire, founded new towns and strove to prevent the maladministration of justice and the universal corruption prevalent among the State officials. Intent on developing the resources of her realm, she negotiated commercial treaties with western Powers, founded harbours such as that of Odessa—the future centre of the grain trade of Europe—increased her mercantile marine, as well as the traffic by land with China and the East and continued the system of canals in Russia begun by Peter the Great. To prevent the terrible mortality among children and to lower the death-rate of the people, she founded orphanages, hospitals, and schools of medicine and chemistry. She also invoked the assistance of foreign doctors and encouraged inoculation for smallpox in Russia, by being herself vaccinated, together with her son Bobrinski, by the English physician Dimsdale.

Catherine encouraged art, endowed the capital with valuable paintings and sculptures by foreign artists, and collected rare books and manuscripts, which formed the nucleus of the Imperial Library at Petersburg. But her chief claim to fame lies in her educational reforms, and, owing to her untiring efforts to promote public instruction, the nation made rapid progress in literature and mental culture. The Empress believed in education for both sexes and all classes. Besides boarding-schools and gymnasia for the democracy, she established the Institute of Smolna for the daughters of the nobility, where good manners, foreign languages, and the domestic virtues were inculcated under the direction of the French Madame

Lafond. A cadet corps also was founded under Colonel Betzkoi, for boys, for the pursuit of secular studies, as well as for those of a purely military character. In 1783, the presidency of the Academy of Sciences at Petersburg was entrusted to Catherine's cultivated friend, Princess Dashkov, and during the thirteen years that the latter held office, she did much to promote research, besides personally instructing in the more elementary branches of science the few students who attended the Academy.

Herself a writer of some merit, the Empress encouraged literary effort and her reign was fertile in the production of original works by Russian authors. Lomonósov still flourished and was appointed Inspector-General of Education. Other poets included Kherasov, Bogdanovitch, Khemnitzer, Denis von Vizin the satirist, and Derzhávin the laureate of Catherine's military triumphs. History was represented in the persons of Golikov, Mankief and Prince Tcherbatov, while the German Pallas described his travels through Southern Russia, Siberia and China, and was rewarded with an estate in the Crimea. Although at the beginning of her reign Catherine had professed to sympathise with the democratic doctrines of the French philosophers, the excesses of the Revolution altered her point of view and rendered her strongly conservative and a violent opponent of all liberal ideas. For this reason, Radistchev, the author of *A Journey to Moscow*, containing some scathing criticisms on the condition of the serfs, was exiled to Siberia and his book was suppressed, while Novikov, the philanthropist and author of several works on education and political economy, was imprisoned in the Schlüsselburg till released by Paul I.

Paul I was now Tsar, to the consternation of the courtiers thus unexpectedly at the mercy of the man

they had previously ridiculed and despised. His public appearances had been rare, and at the time of his mother's apoplectic seizure he had been hastily summoned to the capital from his retirement at Gatchina.

For Catherine's aversion to her son had increased rather than diminished with time and was fostered as much by the Grand Duke's own folly and repellent disposition, as by her dread of him as a possible rival to her throne. Paul's opposition to his mother's foreign and domestic policy widened the breach between them and obliged her to relegate him to comparative obscurity, by appointing him to purely nominal positions in the army and navy, and by excluding him from all participation in affairs of State. Except for a brief experience, in a strictly subordinate position, with the armies in Finland and Turkey and for his Grand Tour of Europe in 1781 with his second wife, Marie Feodorovna (as she was called after her admission into the Greek Church), the heir to the throne lived in complete retirement at one or other of his palaces outside Petersburg, where he occupied himself in drawing up imaginary schemes of military reform and in reorganising the troops under his command, according to Prussian methods. Naturally active in mind and body, he chafed openly at this enforced inaction and eagerly awaited the day of his deliverance from the restraints and humiliations of his position. Towards the end of her reign, Catherine's decision to disinherit her son in favour of her grandson Alexander, was well known, but the will containing these instructions is supposed to have been burnt, by either Paul himself, or by one of his adherents, and in spite of his unpopularity, he ascended the throne without opposition.

As might be expected, his first acts were diametrically opposed to those of Catherine the Great and he

derived a malicious satisfaction after her death, in frustrating the projects he had been powerless during her lifetime to prevent. The edict of Peter the Great, enabling the reigning sovereign to nominate the heir to the throne, was at once revoked and the future of the succession was settled according to the ancient law of primogeniture, from male to male in direct line of inheritance.

Eager to discredit his mother's memory, Paul erased her manifesto at the time of her accession, from the official records, and in spite of his startling likeness in feature and disposition to Peter III, he pretended to doubt the legitimacy of his own birth. Yet he caused the remains of his murdered father to be exhumed and buried with much pomp beside those of the late Empress, in the imperial vault of the Petrapavlovski Cathedral at Petersburg, while Alexis Orlov and the other conspirators in the tragedy of 1762, were compelled to walk behind the coffin of their victim and then were banished the realm.

Counts Rostopchine and Araktchéev became his chief ministers, though he confirmed Bezborodko and other high officials in their offices ; but the political victims of the last reign, such as Kosciusko, Poniatowski and Radistchev were released and loaded with benefits. Princess Dashkov and most of Catherine's favourites and personal attendants, were exiled or imprisoned, and the bones of Potemkin were disinterred and cast into a ditch.

The military reforms evolved at Gatchina were at once imposed upon the army. Prussian drill and the old cumbersome Prussian uniform, with its pigtails and powdered hair, became the order of the day, thereby provoking caustic comments from Marshal Suvarov, which led to his disgrace and banishment to his own estates. The men of the Gatchina corps were accorded special privileges and the place of

honour in the Guard, while the war-worn regiments of the previous reign were treated with contempt and their standards insulted by being called "the petticoats of Catherine," to the natural indignation of the veteran troops.

Filled with a sense of his own importance, Paul exacted extravagant marks of deference from his subjects and compelled all, even the ladies of the nobility, to alight from their carriages and to throw themselves in the mud or snow, whenever he passed them in the streets. His belief in his own infallibility led him to suppose himself capable of directing the naval, military and civil administration of the realm, down to the minutest details, and volumes of anecdotes could be written on the subject of the Emperor's chaotic decrees and egregious mistakes.

He was a kind if capricious father to his younger children, and in spite of his fits of fury and his notorious relations with Mlle Nélidov and later with Mlle Lapoukhine (afterwards Princess Gargarine), his wife seems to have retained her affection for him, until the increasing disorder of his faculties imperilled the lives of herself and her elder sons. Though not actually insane, Paul's mind undoubtedly became unhinged by his sudden elevation to power and his condition was aggravated by the violent fits of passion and the morbid tendencies which he had inherited from his ancestors.

The Tsar's absurd and contradictory edicts on such trifles as the dress, manners and speech of his subjects, made him the laughing-stock of the whole continent. To preserve Russia from the Jacobinism then prevalent in Europe, he forbade foreign travel, except on Government affairs, increased the censorship of the drama and the press, and prohibited the introduction of western literature and art. In Russia, however, no one laughed; the tyranny of the "all-

powerful lunatic" was no matter for jest and the reign of Paul I was a reign of terror almost equalling that of Ivan IV.

The people fled at his approach; ministers of State and public officials were disgraced, recalled and again disgraced, half a dozen times in as many months. Men of all ranks were shot, knouted and imprisoned for the smallest breach of etiquette, and over 12,000 soldiers are said to have suffered banishment, for failing to keep pace with the Emperor's constantly changing regulations in the matter of their uniform and drill. In the words of Prince Kotchoubey, who was for a short time Minister for Foreign Affairs, "the terror we live in here cannot be described. There is literally no one in Russia who is safe from vexation and injustice, and tyranny is at its height." Count Stroganov was dismissed for venturing to predict rain, on an afternoon when the Autocrat of Russia wished the weather to remain fine; while Kotzebué, the German dramatist, and Pastor Seidler of Rangen in Livonia, were both exiled to Siberia,—the former for no worse crime than for being an author and a foreigner, while the latter was knouted and sent to the mines, for innocently possessing a novel by the German writer Lafontaine, which was wrongly supposed to speak disparagingly of the imperial authority.

In religious matters the Tsar exercised a broad-minded toleration. He even alienated the support of the Orthodox Church by the favour he showed to Roman Catholics and dissenters. But he was careful to suppress with a ruthless hand any symptoms of political free-thinking among his subjects. In respect to serfdom, he manifested real beneficence. Although he could not abolish the evil, he lightened the burdens imposed upon the peasantry and considerably curtailed the power and privileges of the nobility.

There was, in fact, no branch of the administration

at which this political tyro did not try his hand. He was anxious to promote his own glorification and at the same time to undo as much as possible of his predecessor's work. But his measures failed for want of cohesion, and politically, socially and economically he increased, rather than reduced, the evils which he strove to reform. The nation groaned under his capricious government, and the only men who exercised any influence over his unstable mind were Rostopchine, Araktchéev and last, but by no means least, his valet Kutaissov, a Turkish prisoner of war, who was ultimately ennobled and rose to be Master of the Horse and paramount at court.

Paul the First's foreign policy was as eccentric as his internal administration, and immediately he ascended the throne he hastened to proclaim himself the champion of universal peace. He is said to have seriously proposed that the sovereigns of Europe should settle their political differences by single combat, and in an open letter to the Powers, he protested his love of harmony and his intention of withdrawing Russia from her warlike obligations, while still maintaining a state of friendly neutrality towards her allies. To this end he refused to continue the armed assistance guaranteed to England and Austria by Catherine the Great, while at the same time he recalled his troops from Persia and reduced the national quota of recruits. But his hatred of the Revolution led him to grant a pension and an asylum at Mittau to Louis XVIII and complicated his relations with France.

The rupture with France was hastened by the aggressive policy of the French Directorate on the continent and especially by the capture of Malta by Napoleon in 1798, followed by the arrival at Petersburg of the fugitive Knights of St John of Jerusalem, to offer the Grand Mastership and protectorate of their order to the Tsar. Delighted with his new and romantic

dignity, Paul warmly espoused their cause, and after continuous negotiations throughout the autumn of the same year, he joined the coalition of England, Austria, Turkey and Naples against France. Taken by surprise and unable adequately to defend the long line of their recent conquests—which now extended from the Zuyder Zee to the Gulf of Taranto—the French were everywhere outnumbered by their enemies and compelled to give ground.

At the suggestion of the allies, Marshal Suvarov was recalled from exile and assumed command of the combined Russian and Austrian armies at Verona. In April 1799, he inflicted a severe defeat on Moreau, at Cassano on the Adda, which obliged the French general to take refuge among the Alps and placed Milan and the Cisalpine Republic in the hands of the allies. Suvarov then laid siege to Mantua and Turin, overthrew Macdonald on the Trebbia in June, after a sanguinary conflict of three days' duration, and in August captured Tortona and annihilated Joubert at Novi, thereby compelling the French to evacuate Italy and retire into the mountains.

In recognition of these triumphs, the hereditary title of Prince of Italy was conferred upon Suvarov by the Tsar; but the veteran Marshal's vanity, eccentricities and independence gave great offence to the court of Vienna and to the confederate generals who were his subordinates. Moreover, the obvious intention of Austria to retain the greater part of Italy for herself, instead of restoring the dethroned Italian princes to their estates, led to dissension among the allies. Finally, in the autumn of 1799, Suvarov received orders from his Government to abandon Italy and to proceed to Switzerland, there to co-operate with the Russian army under Korsakov.

The unexpected defection of the Austrians, however, and his own incompetence, led to Korsakov's defeat by

Massena at Zürich on 24th September, with the loss of 6000 men, most of his artillery and all his baggage and stores. When Suvarov reached Altorf on 30th September, having crossed the Alps through the St Gothard, after stupendous difficulties, it was to hear of Korsakov's disaster and to find himself without provisions, deserted by his allies, surrounded and outnumbered by his enemies, among the snow-covered passes of that unknown and perilous mountain region.

He was now nearly seventy years old, but, undismayed by his terrible position, Suvarov determined to cut his way to safety with the remnant of the Russian armies. Such was the force of his personality and the devotion of the soldiers to their heroic leader, that he succeeded in his enterprise. He reached Feldkirch on 8th October, by way of Glarus and the Col du Panix, after a retreat which forms one of the most remarkable episodes in the pages of military history and which has for ever crowned the name of Suvarov with fame.

He lingered at Feldkirch for some weeks awaiting the promised Austrian reinforcements, but these never came, and the brigandage of his troops having roused the indignation of the people, he was compelled to pass on into Germany. There he remained till January 1800, when he received orders from the Tsar to return to Russia with the residue of his army. Russian co-operation in the war had ceased. The equivocal conduct of the Austrian generals and the fiasco of the Anglo-Russian expedition against Holland had completed Paul's growing irritation with the courts of Vienna and London, and he resolved to withdraw from the coalition.

Suvarov reached Petersburg in March 1800; but the Tsar, forgetful of the hero's services and indignant at the notorious indiscipline and licence of his forces, refused to see him, and once more dismissed him in disgrace to his own estates. Before a reconciliation

could be effected between them, the Marshal died, worn out by the exertions and hardships of his Italian campaign. He was buried in the Cathedral of St Alexander Nevski at Petersburg, the English ambassador being the only high official present at the funeral.

Disgusted with the ambiguous treatment of England and Austria, which he now accused of treachery, Paul determined to break with the coalition; and pretexts for this sudden change of policy were not far to seek. As far back as October 1799, he had written to George III renewing the league with England, but announcing his intention of recalling Suvarov and his troops to Russia, "owing to the perfidy of the court of Vienna." He communicated this decision to the Emperor of Austria as follows: "Seeing my troops abandoned and delivered up to the enemy by the ally on whom I counted most; seeing that your policy is contrary to my views and that the safety of Europe is being sacrificed to plans for the aggrandisement of your monarchy; having besides every reason to be displeased with the crafty and ambiguous conduct of your minister (Thugut) . . . I hereby declare . . . that from this moment, I abandon your interests, in order to devote myself entirely to my own and those of my allies . . . and I cease to make common cause with your Majesty."

England, however, had no wish to break with Austria, while she further incensed the Tsar by insisting on her right to search neutral vessels, in direct violation of the Treaty of Armed Neutrality. The failure of the Anglo-Russian expedition in the Netherlands, under the incompetent Duke of York, and finally the capture of Malta by Great Britain in September 1800 and her refusal to relinquish the island to Paul in his capacity as Grand Master of the Knights of St John, completed the latter's disillusionment. A diplomatic rupture took place in January 1801, though

without actually leading to war. But the reaction of this violent change of policy proved too much for the already unbalanced mind of the Tsar. Exasperated almost to frenzy, he now became as rabidly antagonistic to his former allies, as he had previously been to France. In February 1801, we find him inditing frantic appeals to Napoleon Bonaparte to unite with him against Austria, and in particular against England, " the common foe."

The First Consul's insidious flattery and such civilities as the unconditional surrender of the Russian prisoners, fully equipped and neatly clothed, had already paved the way towards an understanding with the Tsar. The latter, full of admiration for his new hero, lost no time in dismissing Louis XVIII from Mittau and throwing himself heart and soul into the alliance with France.

Together, Paul and Bonaparte planned the continuance of the continental war, the invasion of England and the partition of Europe. Turkey was to be dismembered and a Greek republic established under the protectorate of Russia ; India was to be entered by way of Turkestan and the English settlements were to be annexed. In preparation for this latter enterprise, Paul sent his troops into the Caucasus and united the province of Giorgia to Russia, but before he could proceed further the tragedy of his sudden death cut short all his schemes.

The Tsar's growing violence and caprice had long given rise to a belief that he was insane and consequently unfit to wear the crown. The patience of the court was exhausted, and, as early as December 1799, a number of conspirators, headed by Count Panin, the Vice-Chancellor, and by all the leading State officials, had endeavoured to promote a *coup d'état* which would force the Emperor to abdicate in favour of his eldest son. The scheme miscarried, however, and since that

time the disorganisation of the realm and the frenzy of its ruler had steadily increased. Paul's treatment of his *entourage* was such, that no man dared call his soul his own. His wife and elder sons and his two faithful friends, Rostopchine and Araktchéev, suffered with the rest, while all his ministers lived in hourly expectation of disgrace, exile and even the knout. All who could, fled the country, and so much was the court depleted by the banishment or emigration of its members, that, in November 1800, the Tsar was constrained to publish a general amnesty, in hopes of persuading his nobility to return to Petersburg. Gradually a strong party arose, determined at all costs to rid the nation of its tyrant. Foremost among them were Count Plato Zoubov and his brothers, lately returned from exile; Count Pahlen, who had replaced Rostopchine as Foreign Minister; and General Bennigsen, the victim on several occasions of his master's injustice, but at that time holding the confidential post of governor of the Mikhailovski Palace, which citadel, owing to his constant fear of assassination, the Emperor had recently erected and fortified for his own use within the walls of the capital.

The plot was well organised, the complicity of the Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine was secured, as well as that of the Imperial Guard, and the night of 23rd March 1801 was the date fixed for its execution. The conspirators separated into two bodies—one led by Count Pahlen and Valerian Zoubov, the other by Bennigsen, Plato Zoubov and his brother Nicholas—and entered the palace by different doors. They bribed the sentries on duty and gained access to the imperial apartments without further difficulty. Awakened by the noise of their approach and instinctively aware that he was trapped, the Emperor tried to hide himself behind his bed. But he was discovered and dragged from his place of concealment by Bennig-

sen and Plato Zoubov, who then adjured him to sign the decree of abdication in favour of his son, which they had brought with them. Paul refused and shouted for help, upon which the younger conspirators flung themselves upon him and dragged him to the ground. During the prolonged scuffle which ensued—for Paul, though short, was wiry—Bennigsen and Plato Zoubov seem to have withdrawn into the next room, leaving the Tsar to his fate. The unhappy man, screaming horribly and struggling to the last, was hacked to pieces by his murderers and strangled with the military sash of one of their number.

When all was over, Count Pahlen went to announce the fact to the Grand Duke Alexander, who is said to have been asleep at the time and to have fainted with emotion on hearing the fatal news. But in spite of protestations to the contrary, there is a mass of evidence to show that Alexander knew what was afoot and was prepared for any emergency. It is unlikely that he had anticipated his father's death; probably he merely consented to the plan that Paul should be forced to resign the throne in his favour and pass the remainder of his life in honourable captivity. None the less, after the first natural revulsion of feeling, Alexander seems to have accepted his new dignity with equanimity, if not satisfaction, and to have taken no steps against his father's murderers, most of whom were retained in office and even recompensed.

The ex-Empress Marie Feodorovna abandoned herself at first to her grief, and, losing her self-control under the shock of her sudden bereavement, rushed about the palace demanding that she should be proclaimed Empress of Russia, like her predecessor Catherine the Great. She was calmed with difficulty, but finally accepted the fact of her son's accession and confided herself and her younger children to his care. The soldiers, with the exception of some few of the

Gatchina troops, likewise acclaimed the new emperor without demur; while, in the words of Madame Vigée Lebrun, who was then a resident in Russia, "the people were delirious with joy, singing, dancing and embracing each other in the streets," in rapture at their deliverance from the tyranny of the past four and a half years. England also rejoiced, but in France the consternation was great; indeed, so furious was Napoleon at this unlooked-for frustration of his schemes, that he openly accused Great Britain of complicity in the crime.

CHAPTER IX

ALEXANDER I

1801–1825

MANY hopes centred round Alexander I at the time of his accession. The integrity and benevolence of his disposition were well known, and there was a general feeling that his advent to the throne inaugurated a fresh epoch in the national regeneration, "a new era of peace and justice" for Russia and Europe at large.

He possessed great personal charm, and, unlike Paul I (whose phenomenal ugliness led to the substitution of the double-headed eagle for the imperial portrait upon the coinage of the realm), Alexander was tall, fair and handsome, though he was short-sighted, slightly lame and deaf in one ear, as the result of an illness contracted in his youth. He was well read, but, as already mentioned, he had been educated under the auspices of his grandmother and of the Swiss jacobin Cesar de Laharpe, and the contradictions of his upbringing remained with him through life. He was naturally upright and high-minded, but his difficult position between his grandmother and his father, and the obligation to keep on good terms with both, had inculcated a tendency to duplicity and vacillation, which increased with time and proved the ruin of his future actions. He remained under the influence of Laharpe till his eighteenth year, imbibing the latter's literary tastes and humanitarian principles with all the facility of an unusually receptive mind;

but the outbreak of the French Revolution and Catherine the Second's hatred of republicanism, occasioned Laharpe's dismissal in 1796, as well as a fervent endeavour on the Empress's part to eradicate the liberal doctrines he had instilled into her grandson.

The effect upon Alexander of this capricious training, combined with the instability of character which he had inherited from his father, was disastrous. He lived to disappoint the hopes of his warmest admirers and to witness the failure of the ideals he had himself created, but lacked the strength to achieve. Earnest, well intentioned, deeply religious, generous and humane, he was at the same time weak, timid, superstitious and fundamentally insincere; for ever promulgating theories which his own conduct contradicted and missing the vision within him for want of resolution to pursue it to an end.

In 1793, at the early age of sixteen, he had been married to Princess Louisa Maria of Baden, who took the name of Elizabeth on her reception into the Orthodox Church. But the couple were ill-assorted, and their children—three daughters—died in infancy. In spite of her virtue and her piety, the Empress's views were too confined, her temperament was too cold and austere to accord happily with her husband's impressionable nature, so that, although he always treated her with affection and respect, his deepest love and confidence were given to his favourite sister, the Grand Duchess Catherine, afterwards Queen of Würtemberg.

Alexander ascended the throne determined to redress the wrongs inflicted upon the nation by Paul I and to govern "according to the principles and after the heart of Catherine II." His benevolent intentions were at first hampered by his inability to free himself from the jurisdiction of his fellow-conspirators in the *coup d'état* which had raised him to power. But death

came to his aid by removing some of them—notably the Zoubovs—in the course of the next few months, while Pahlen was overthrown by the intrigues of Count Panin, who was himself dismissed in October 1801.

The Emperor was now free to embark upon his long-cherished schemes of regeneration, and, surrounding himself with such men as Stroganov, Novossiltsov, Kotchoubey and the Polish Prince Adam Czartoryski—all young and enthusiastic idealists like himself—he established a Committee of Reform or Privy Council, which evolved numerous projects for the emancipation and enlightenment of the people.

The exiles, voluntary and involuntary, of the last reign were recalled; the Secret Inquisition was abolished, corporal punishment was restricted, the censorship of the press was reduced, foreigners were once more encouraged to visit Russia and the barriers erected against westernism by Paul I were demolished.

The Senate was reconstituted and the Government was reformed and centralised; while in 1802, the "Colleges" of Peter the Great were replaced by eight ministries or State departments, similar to those existent in other nations. The laws also were reorganised and administered by means of the Mir or village council and by the Duma or national council, with final appeal to the Imperial Council, at the head of which was the Tsar himself, with power to veto any measure of which he disapproved. For, in spite of his democratic utterances, Alexander was an autocrat at heart. No one was permitted to oppose his will, and he frequently published edicts in direct contradiction to the wishes of his ministers and the Senate.

In all ways not affecting his personal authority, however, the Emperor showed himself to be genuinely broad-minded, and while granting toleration to all forms of religious thought, he did much to promote the

intellectual growth of the nation. The Ministry of National Enlightenment, or Public Education, was created, with Count Zavadovski and the Tsar's former tutor, Mouraviev, at its head. Under their auspices, numerous elementary schools were established throughout the empire, the number of ecclesiastical seminaries, universities and government schools were increased, and education amongst both the clergy and the laity was greatly extended.

The liberation of the serfs was discussed, and by the ukase of February 1803 many peasants were granted a certain degree of personal liberty, though they were still forced to maintain themselves and their families by working for their masters on the land to which they belonged. The powers of owners over their slaves were limited, and a certain sum of money was allotted annually out of the State funds towards the redemption of the serfs. But fearing to provoke the animosity of the landed classes, Alexander lacked the moral courage to abolish the evil totally, so that slavery in a modified form, and even slave-markets, continued to exist in Russia for yet another generation.

Alexander I needed peace for his schemes of reform. He therefore hastened to reverse his father's foreign policy, and, while maintaining the alliance with France, to avert the threatened war with England by a conciliatory letter to George III, and by concessions to the maritime interests of Great Britain, which amounted practically to an annulment of the League of Armed Neutrality. All Europe was at war with Napoleon Bonaparte; but the Treaty of Lunéville between France and Austria in 1801 and of Amiens between France and England in 1802 encouraged the Tsar in his visions of universal harmony and of himself as "the arbitrator of peace for the civilised world." His dreams were assiduously fostered by Kotchoubey and Czartoryski, who were successively Foreign Mini-

ster during the early years of his reign. Both were anxious for a period of tranquillity which should enable Russia to concentrate upon her own affairs.

In pursuance of the Tsar's pacific projects, Novossiltsov was sent to London in 1804, to propose the formation of a league to settle the differences among European nations by international arbitration. England and Russia, as the two most disinterested of the Powers concerned, were to predominate ; but all States genuinely desirous of peace were invited to join, to assist in the task of preserving the balance of continental power and of liberating Europe from the encroachments of France. These proposals were somewhat coldly received ; but the League formed the nucleus of the third coalition against France, and was joined by England, Austria, Sweden and Naples, the two first Powers being already at war with the common enemy.

The murder of the Duc d'Enghien in 1804, Bonaparte's assumption of imperial rank in 1805, the crushing defeat of the Austrian general, Mack, at Ulm and Murat's entry into Vienna, completed Alexander's disillusionment and compelled him to realise that only by conquering France, could Europe hope for peace. On the other hand, the destruction of French maritime power at Trafalgar, caused Napoleon to concentrate all his energies on the campaign in Central Europe, in hopes of conquering the continent and thus reducing England to submission by suppressing her international trade.

Europe awoke to its danger, and Alexander, robbed of his optimistic beliefs, severed diplomatic relations with France and prepared to take the field in support of his allies in the autumn of 1805.

Every effort was made to induce Prussia to join the coalition, and the historic meeting between the Tsar and Frederick William III at the tomb of Frederick

the Great, terminated in the Treaty of Potsdam (November 1805). By this pact, Frederick William undertook to furnish 180,000 men to the confederation, in the event of Napoleon's refusal to evacuate Germany, Switzerland and Holland, and to indemnify the dethroned king of Sardinia. Six weeks later, however, this agreement was reversed; the vacillation of Frederick William and his ministers, the threats and persuasions of Napoleon and finally the effect of Austerlitz, led to the Treaty of Schönbrünn (December 1805), whereby Prussia withdrew from the coalition and entered into an alliance with France, with promise of Hanover as the price of her neutrality.

Meanwhile Kutuzov, at the head of an army corps composed of the flower of the Russian troops and attended by two military commanders of tried skill and ability, in the persons of Prince Bagration and of Miloradovitch, entered Germany in October 1805, intending to go to the assistance of his Austrian allies. News of the disaster at Ulm, however, obliged him to retire into Moravia, where in November he effected a junction at Olmütz with the Austrian and Russian reinforcements, each of which was commanded by its own emperor, thus giving the name of "the battle of the three emperors" to the coming conflict.

The French army, under Napoleon, lay at Brünn, and on 2nd December the opposing forces joined in battle near Austerlitz, where, in spite of the numerical and geographical advantages of the allies, the superior strategy of Napoleon gained the day. The Russians fought with obstinacy and courage, losing 21,000 men, 133 guns and 30 standards; but the Austrians, disheartened by their previous misfortunes, seem to have yielded with scarcely a struggle and were openly accused of treachery by the coalition.

Two days later, the Austrian emperor met his conqueror on the field, and obtained an armistice, on

condition (amongst other clauses) that the Russians immediately withdrew into their own land. On 26th December, a separate peace was concluded between Napoleon and Francis II at Presburg, by which treaty Austria was deprived of Venice, the Tyrol and Austrian Swabia, and compelled to recognise the sovereignty and independence of Baden, Würtemberg and Bavaria. Francis further abandoned his right to the ancient dignity of the Caesars for the title of Emperor of Austria. This sacrifice was not expressly mentioned in the treaty, but was rendered necessary by the Confederation of the Rhine created by Napoleon in the summer of 1806, which involved the union of southern and western Germany as a dependency of France and relegated the Holy Roman Empire to a state of desuetude.

Ferdinand of Naples having been dispossessed and his kingdom given to Napoleon's brother Joseph Bonaparte, the third coalition was at an end; and Russia, deserted by her chief allies, found herself almost alone on the Continent in her determination to resist the encroachments of France and to "ensure the freedom of Europe." In spite of overtures from Napoleon, Alexander obstinately refused to sue for peace. He set himself at once to form a fresh confederacy, which was joined by England and Sweden, and towards the close of 1806 by Prussia, at last provoked beyond endurance by constant humiliations at the hand of her Corsican oppressor.

Prussia, however, was in no condition for war. Her civil and military administration were alike weak and incompetent, her allies were too far off to render effective assistance in time and Russia was hampered by a war with Turkey in Moldavia. Left therefore to meet the first fury of the storm alone, Prussia was utterly crushed at Jena and at Auerstadt in October 1806, while Napoleon, having captured the important

fortresses of Spandau, Stettin, Magdeburg and Küstrin, and forced Frederick William to take refuge in Russia, made a triumphal entry into Berlin. Thence he issued the Berlin Decree against English commerce, which forbade any European State connected with France to trade with Great Britain.

Having destroyed Prussia and rendered all Central Europe a dependency of France, Napoleon next resolved upon the extinction of the Russian empire. With this object he invaded Poland and the Baltic Provinces under pretence of freeing the inhabitants from the Muscovite yoke. He occupied Warsaw, and forced the Russian army under Kamenski to evacuate Poland. But at Eylau, on 7th February 1807, he was confronted by Bennigsen, and after a long and bloody battle, fought in deep snow, he received a severe check, accompanied by such heavy losses that he was forced to abandon the advance on Königsberg and to wait for reinforcements. The Russians suffered even more severely than the French. Their casualties were estimated at over 18,000 men ; but though not actually victorious, they had temporarily disabled their foes, raised their own prestige in the eyes of Europe and alarmed Napoleon into opening negotiations for peace. His overtures were refused, however, and at Bartenstein, in April, the league between England, Russia, Prussia and Sweden was renewed, each nation pledging itself to continue the war until such time as the common wrongs of Europe had been redressed.

In the spring, Bennigsen assumed the offensive, hoping to crush the enemy before the army corps under Ney had time to unite with the main body. But at Friedland, on 14th June, he found himself opposed by the whole strength of the French army, and being outnumbered and outgeneralled, he sustained a complete defeat, in spite of the valour of the Russian troops.

An armistice of two months gave Alexander time to review the situation and to consider the advisability of abandoning his attitude as the champion of European liberty. His army had been annihilated, Prussia had ceased to exist, England had failed to fulfil her obligations, Austria held herself aloof and Russia was weary of a costly war which involved endless sacrifice on behalf of her allies and brought no advantage to the nation. Finally, Alexander's resentment at England's inactivity won the day. He determined to accept Napoleon's proposals, and on 25th June a meeting took place between the two emperors at Tilsit, on a raft anchored in the middle of the River Niemen. Frederick William of Prussia, although present at Tilsit, was not admitted to this preliminary conference, which lasted two hours and was of a most friendly and confidential nature. Each monarch expressed himself as charmed with the other's personality and lavished compliments and courtesies on his rival.

Repeated deliberations took place between the three sovereigns, till the Peace of Tilsit was signed on 7th July 1807. By this, Russia recovered all lost territory, with the addition of certain Polish lands, but Prussia was robbed of half her possessions and reduced to the level of a secondary State, while her Polish provinces were formed into the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. A secret treaty was also concluded between the two emperors, whereby Alexander undertook to support the arms of France against England, in the event of the latter Power declining to make peace; Sweden, in case of a similar refusal, was to be invaded and Finland annexed to Russia. It was further agreed that Russia should obtain possession of Moldavia and Wallachia, through the mediation of France and that Turkey should be given a respite of three months in which to cease hostilities and remove her troops from the

Danubian provinces. At the end of that time, if still recalcitrant, the two contracting Powers were to "withdraw all the Ottoman provinces in Europe—Roumelia and Constantinople excepted—from the yoke and tyranny of the Turks."

In this treaty, sometimes called the "treacherous peace," Alexander and Napoleon surrendered all sense of political honour to the futherance of their own ambitions; but while such conduct was part and parcel of Napoleon's foreign policy, it is difficult to reconcile it with Alexander's early aims and quixotic ideals. "Romanticism," says his biographer Shilder, "gave place to imperial egotism." He sided with the oppressor at a moment when his influence might have been instrumental in restoring the balance of power in Europe, and, by promoting a permanent peace between the empires of the east and west, he sacrificed the cause of Prussia, Austria and Sweden, that he night enrich Russia at their expense.

Such a peace could not possibly endure and was bound to lead to international complications. England, Turkey and Sweden were not likely tamely to permit the aggressions of Napoleon and his accomplice, while Alexander's hopes of obtaining Constantinople with the aid of France had been cruelly disappointed, and all Russia resented the alliance with the Corsican upstart, who was universally regarded as Antichrist and as the enemy of mankind.

Czartoryski, Novossiltsov and their colleagues were strongly opposed to the French alliance, so that Alexander's change of policy necessitated a change of ministry, and Speranski became Premier and Secretary of State, with Rumantsov at the head of foreign affairs. The former, a clever and enlightened man, whom the historian Karamsin considers as "the most remarkable statesman in all Russian history," was the son of a village priest of humble birth and

attracted the notice of the Emperor while acting as secretary to Count Kotchoubey. His executive ability and strength of character were admirably fitted to counterbalance the mental fluctuations of the Tsar, while his ardent admiration for Napoleon and his desire to consolidate the connection with France, made him especially acceptable to Alexander at a time when the Peace of Tilsit was an object of general suspicion and disgust. During his five years in office, Speranski exercised a great and beneficial influence upon the destinies of Russia, besides completing the legislative and administrative reforms begun by his predecessors and improving the fiscal system by such innovations as the establishment of the Imperial Bank, a sinking fund and the publication of an annual budget.

In spite of, or rather in consequence of, the Peace of Tilsit, affairs in Russia were in a critical condition. Discontent with the Emperor increased daily; the exchequer had been greatly strained by the recent war, and adherence to Napoleon's "Continental System" forbidding all commercial intercourse with England, bade fair to ruin the import and export trade of the North. Abroad, matters were equally disturbed; and although an armistice had been concluded with Turkey, through the intervention of France, hostilities against Persia and the disaffected tribes of the Caucasus still continued. Persia had declared war on Russia in consequence of the annexation of Giorgia at the time of Alexander's succession. Under Prince Titsianov, the campaign was prolonged with varying success till 1813, when peace was declared and the province of Shirvan was united to Russia.

Meanwhile the failure of France to observe the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit had somewhat strained her relations with Russia, and in the autumn of 1808 Napoleon determined to strengthen the league by timely concessions which should leave him free to

continue the war in Spain, unhampered by fears for his supremacy in the east.

The two emperors met at Erfurt in October, attended by the various vassal sovereigns of the Rhine Confederation and by representatives from the courts of Vienna and Berlin. Nearly three weeks passed in pageants and festivities of the most costly and magnificent description ; but, in spite of these distractions, Napoleon and Alexander found time to discuss the important political matters which had brought them together. The alliance between their respective nations was renewed. Alexander undertook to protect Napoleon's interests in central and eastern Europe during the French operations in Spain, in return for which France agreed to ratify Russian aggressions in Finland and the Danubian provinces. There was also some talk of a marriage between Napoleon and Alexander's youngest sister, the Grand Duchess Anna, but the project came to nothing, owing to the Princess's youth and to her mother's intense aversion to the match.

In accordance with the agreement at Tilsit, war with England was declared in October 1807, and Sweden—who had renewed the alliance with Great Britain and steadily refused to enter into diplomatic relations with either Russia or France—was invaded in 1808. But the folly of Gustavus IV and the treachery of his generals led to the defeat of the Swedes ; and by the Treaty of Fredrikshamm in 1809, Sweden consented to declare war on England, and ceded Finland, Aland and the greater part of Bothnia, with the important fortress of Sveborg, to Russia.

Previous to the annexation of Finland, Alexander issued a proclamation, known as the Act of Assurance, by which he confirmed the religion, fundamental laws, privileges and rights of the inhabitants, in accordance with their ancient constitution. He further convoked

the Diet at Borgö, which he opened in person and where he repeatedly referred to Finland as " a nation governed by its own laws," and won all hearts by his liberal and conciliatory attitude. Finland, he wrote, was to have " a distinct and separate political existence, so that the people shall not regard themselves as subject to Russia, but as attached to her in their own interests. For this reason, not only their civil but their political laws have been retained." These pledges were renewed by Alexander's successors, and for nearly ninety years Finland remained a loyal adherent of the Russian empire and one of its best governed and most prosperous provinces.

In 1809, Austria having once more declared war on France, Alexander was obliged by the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit to furnish an army in support of his French ally. But the sympathy of the Russian troops being entirely on the side of the oppressed, their co-operation proved of more hindrance than help to Napoleon, who did not hesitate to complain of their " traitorous conduct."

After Wagram had culminated in the Treaty of Vienna and the annexation of western Galicia to the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, Russian animosity against France increased, and, in spite of the efforts of Speranski, war between the two nations became inevitable.

Time, too, had chilled the Tsar's ardour for the French alliance, and causes for disruption were ready to his hand. Napoleon's aggressions in Holland, Poland and Northern Germany ; his marriage with the Archduchess Marie Louise and consequent abandonment of Russian interests for those of Austria ; French rivalry in the Near East ; above all, the deleterious effect of the Continental System upon Russian commerce, roused Alexander to a sense of danger and strengthened his resolution to sever the connection with France.

Towards the close of 1810, an imperial edict reopened Russian ports to neutral vessels and at the same time imposed a duty on foreign wines and other luxuries, which dealt a heavy blow to French commerce and to the continental blockade. Such a decree was tantamount to a declaration of war, and was so understood in Paris. But neither State was ready for action, so that diplomatic intercourse between the two nations continued, and the year 1811 was spent by both Powers in active preparations for the coming campaign.

The enthusiasm in Russia was tremendous. Speranski, who still preserved his French illusions, was disgraced and succeeded by Count Araktchéev, the faithful servant of Paul I, but a harsh and bigoted reactionary who was destined to exercise a fatal influence over the unstable mind of his new master.

To free his armies on the Danube, Alexander hastened to make peace with Turkey ; and in May 1812, by the Treaty of Bucharest, he resigned his pretensions to Moldavia and Wallachia, but retained Bessarabia, with the fortresses of Bender and Khotin and the districts bordered by the Pruth and the Lower Danube. The Porte took no part in the coming war ; but Sweden, under Bernadotte, threw in her lot with Russia, and England, although unable to provide any material assistance, contributed her moral support. Prussia and Austria, who were compelled to co-operate with their conqueror and to place their resources and armaments at his disposal, concluded a hollow and humiliating alliance with France at the beginning of the same year.

Early in May, the diplomatic rupture between France and Russia was completed : both emperors quitted their respective capitals to join their armies at the front. The French armament—" the army of twenty nations," as it was called—was the largest

ever seen in Europe, and consisted of over half a million men, representative of every country and province incorporated into the Napoleonic empire. The Russian forces amounted to rather less than half that number.

Napoleon, having received the homage of the Austrian and Prussian monarchs at Dresden, crossed the Niemen and invaded Russian territory on 23rd June. Driving the enemy before him, he entered Vilna in Russian Poland a few days later; but the incredible difficulty and ultimate collapse of the French transport delayed his advance and enabled the two Russian armies, under Barclay de Tolly and Bagration, to unite at Smolensk.

Barclay counselled a defensive warfare. His plan, like that of Peter the Great, was to lure the enemy on, till hunger and disease should have reduced their numbers sufficiently to enable the Russians to assume the offensive with some certainty of success. But he was overruled; the Russians clamoured for battle, and several desperate encounters took place in the neighbourhood of Smolensk, which resulted in the destruction of the town and the loss of 20,000 men. Barclay withdrew in good order and resumed the retreat; but the discontent of the army at these retrogressive tactics, and the national indignation at the loss of Smolensk, induced the Tsar to deprive him of the supreme command and give it to Kutuzov.

Napoleon then found himself in the heart of Russia, with the land laid waste before him, all transport an impossibility and his troops so reduced by their privations that every day's march is said to have cost him 3000 men. He, too, longed for a decisive engagement, and at last, to his joy, the Russians halted at Borodino, 70 miles west of Moscow, and prepared to give battle.

The conflict, which began early on the morning of

7th September, lasted all day and proved one of the bloodiest engagements known to military history; the French losses were estimated at 30,000 men and those of Russia at 40,000, including the gallant Bagration, who was mortally wounded. Both sides claimed the victory; but though Napoleon remained in possession of the field, his losses, owing to his isolated position, were irreparable, while Kutuzov was able to execute a disciplined retreat and to await reinforcements beneath the walls of Moscow, which he prepared to defend.

It was decided, however, that Moscow could not withstand the assaults of the invader; the governor, Count Rostopchine, therefore resolved not only to evacuate the city, but to destroy it, and the citizens, with unparalleled patriotism and self-sacrifice, applauded this decision, rather than permit their ancient capital to fall into the hands of the hated foreigner. The inhabitants abandoned their dwellings, bombs and combustibles were placed in many of the public buildings and the treasures and archives were removed, as well as all means of extinguishing the flames. Three hundred criminals were then released from prison, with orders to set fire to different portions of the city, while Count Rostopchine himself gave the signal to begin the work of destruction, by setting alight his own palace, with all its priceless works of art and the second best library in the empire.

Napoleon and the Grand Army entered Moscow on 14th September, marching through the silent and deserted streets of a city where every shop and house was empty, save for a few foreigners, and in which all means of subsistence had been either removed, buried, or destroyed. Napoleon took up his residence in the Kremlin, and almost immediately Moscow burst into flame. The conflagration lasted six days and destroyed a tenth part of the city.

The burning of Moscow, which should have provided stores and winter accommodation for the French army, meant the loss of the campaign. Yet Napoleon seemed unable to realise the magnitude of the disaster and wasted five weeks in fruitless negotiations for peace, or at least for an armistice which would enable him to retire through fresh country, where provisions for his troops could be obtained.

Alexander's determination not to treat with the invader remained unalterable, and at last Napoleon reluctantly gave orders for the retreat to commence. Mortier and his divisions remained behind to undermine the Kremlin, which impotent revenge roused the indignation of all Europe and destroyed many of the principal buildings, including the palace of the Tsars and a hospital full of French wounded.

The remains of the Grand Army began their homeward march on 19th October, accompanied by 50,000 non-combatants—men, women, children and invalids of foreign extraction—who feared to be left behind.

The winter set in with unexampled severity ; supplies there were none, food was unobtainable and Napoleon's efforts to return by way of Kaluga were frustrated by Kutuzov, who forced the French to retreat along the devastated road of their advance. Armed bands of peasants and Cossacks harassed the fugitives on all sides, although the Russian army, marching parallel along a southern road, avoided actual contact with the enemy and left their destruction to the elements. Deep snow and as many as 40 degrees of frost added to the terrors of the retreat. All discipline was at an end, and the regiments marched in indiscriminate bands, living on the horses of the cavalry, or, when those failed, on the flesh of their own comrades, over whose dead bodies they fought like beasts of prey. The soldiers died by thousands on the roads, or dragged themselves along, sometimes on

hands and knees, so horribly mutilated by frost-bite and disease as to be unrecognisable as human beings.

At length the starving, half-naked fugitives reached Smolensk; but their sufferings were not ended, for it was found that the magazines were empty and that no stores, or means of shelter had been provided. Moreover, two Russian armies were hurrying to cut off their retreat, and it was necessary to push forward without delay.

At Witepsk and again at Krasnoi, several divisions of the French army were cut to pieces; yet still Napoleon, his Old Guard and some few battalions of his decimated host pressed on, till they succeeded in reaching the banks of the Beresina on 28th November. Here, surrounded by 140,000 Russians, this comparative handful of French managed to cross the river; but directly the troops had passed, the bridge was destroyed, to prevent pursuit, not only by the enemy, but also by the stragglers and camp-followers of the French army. Many of these unfortunates—including women and children—in their despair at seeing themselves thus deserted and exposed to the Russian guns, threw themselves into the river and were drowned, or crushed between the blocks of ice. As many as 12,000 perished in this manner, and their bodies reappeared on the surface of the waters with the coming of the spring thaw.

At Malodeczno, Napoleon issued his famous proclamation announcing the failure of his Russian campaign, and at Smorgoni he resigned what was left of his forces to Murat and hurried back to Paris, whither he travelled incognito as the Duke of Vicenza. The remainder of his host continued their journey, and such as escaped being massacred by the Jews at Vilna, crossed the Niemen on 13th December.

The Grand Army was extinct; not a twentieth part of the half million who had entered Russia six

months previously, survived to tell the ghastly tale. Eye-witnesses tell us, that " to the hideous spectacles exhibited between the Beresina and the Niemen, a parallel is not to be found in the annals of the world." Again, that " from Moscow to the front is a continual field of battle . . . a desert where we see only snow, crows, wolves and corpses. The prisoner dies of cold and hunger, or is killed by food and warmth. Monseigneur the Grand Duke Constantine brought some of these unfortunates into his own kitchen, giving orders that they should receive every possible care ; at the first spoonful of soup, they died. Living for three months on carrion, and even men . . . they exhale so fetid an odour that three or four are enough to render a house insupportable."

By direction of the Government, the bodies of as many horses and men as possible were burnt ; but the wood for so gigantic a holocaust was lacking, so that the plague, typhus and other malignant diseases broke out in many places, which, amongst other victims, carried off Prince George of Oldenburg, the husband of the Grand Duchess Catherine, and all but killed the Grand Duke Constantine.

The " Patriotic War " being over, it was felt by the Government at Petersburg that Russia had done enough for the continental weal and might now sheathe the sword with honour and study her own interests. Roumantsov counselled peace ; but Alexander, rendered implacable by the ruin of Moscow, declined to forego his revenge and announced his determination to pursue the war till there was " a general and solid peace, ensuring the security of Russia and Europe."

He therefore invaded Poland in January 1813, defeated the French contingents at Elbing and at Kalisch and forced Warsaw to capitulate. The Poles had hailed Napoleon as their deliverer and con-

tributed 60,000 men to the Polish Legion of the Grand Army. Nevertheless, Prince Czartoryski entreated the Tsar to renounce his vengeance and to establish Poland as an independent kingdom under the sovereignty of his youngest brother, the Grand Duke Michael. Alexander granted the Poles an unconditional pardon, but he could not forget their disloyalty, and, though he disavowed all resentment, he declined to see Poland ruled by any other than himself.

Meanwhile, the Tsar strained every nerve to induce all Europe to unite against France and to crush Napoleon ere he had time to recover from the disasters of his Russian campaign. Austria and Prussia held aloof at first; but eventually the latter Power was forced into the fray by the defection of General von Yorck, who, animated by the purest and most patriotic motives, signed the Convention of Tauroggen on his own responsibility, and thereby practically withdrew the Prussian army from the French alliance and delivered Könisberg to the Russians.

The pusillanimous Frederick William III, fearing Napoleon's wrath, repudiated the treaty and superceded Yorck; but the gallant soldier, while protesting his loyalty and devotion, declined to obey. "With a bleeding heart," he wrote, "I burst the bonds of obedience, and continue the war on my own responsibility. The army desires war with France, the nation desires it, the King himself desires it, but his will is not free. The army must make his will free."

The former Prussian minister, Freiherr von Stein, who had been proscribed by Napoleon in 1808 and had taken service under the Tsar, hailed Yorck's revolt as the signal for Prussia's emancipation; and at length Frederick William, on the advice of his ministers Hardenberg and Scharnhorst, concluded a treaty of alliance with Russia and nerved himself to declare war on France in March 1813. Being destitute of

men and money, he was liberally aided in both by England, and, on 18th March, Blücher crossed the Elbe. The " War of Liberation " had begun.

Napoleon meanwhile had raised new armaments, which, though mainly composed of raw recruits, were considerably stronger than those of the allies, besides being better commanded. Dissensions between the allied generals were frequent; while Alexander, who directed the military and diplomatic operations of the Coalition, lacked both resolution and experience. In the course of May, after a series of hotly contested battles, the French were victorious at Lützen and at Bautzen, had entered Dresden and recaptured the cities of Lübeck and Hamburg. The allies, however, suffered no decisive reverse, and the Armistice of Pleswitz in June enabled them to reorganise their resources and to incorporate the newly created Prussian Landwehr or militia with the regular army. Metternich, the Austrian minister, then offered his country's mediation for a general peace; but Napoleon's refusal of the allied terms renewed the war, and Austria, by the Treaty of Reichenbach, joined the Coalition.

Hostilities recommenced in August, but Austria's defection altered the aspect of affairs; Napoleon was outnumbered and, for the first time in his career, on several occasions found himself outmanœuvred by his enemies. He was victorious at Dresden, but he was defeated successively at Grossbeeren, the Katzbach, Kulm and Dennewitz, besides losing 100,000 men, all his stores and most of his artillery. By October he was no longer able to maintain his positions along the line of the Elbe and was hemmed in at Leipzig by the united forces of the allies. There, from 16th to 19th October, was fought the " Battle of Nations," which resulted in the complete overthrow of the French. It also marked the end of the Napoleonic empire in

Germany, for the princes of the Rhenish Confederacy immediately hastened to renounce its supremacy and to join the Coalition.

Napoleon retreated across the Rhine, whence he reopened negotiations with the allied sovereigns, who, after a conference at Frankfort, offered him peace, on condition that the French empire was reduced to its "natural borders" of the Alps, the Rhine and the Pyrenees. These terms, however, were scornfully refused, and after much deliberation the allies, at Alexander's instigation, decided to invade France and to march on Paris.

The armies of the Coalition entered France from the east in January 1814, while at the same moment Wellington crossed the southern frontier from the Pyrenees, and, having vanquished Soult at Toulouse, advanced to add his forces to the encircling columns of the allies. Surrounded on three sides, but still confident of his own invincibility, Napoleon disputed every inch of the road to Paris and in a series of desperately contested battles maintained a resistance worthy of the highest admiration. He was often victorious, and inflicted enormous losses upon his enemies, but their numerical advantages were great and the pressure of their advance increased daily.

The gates of Paris were reached in March, and after a feeble resistance the city surrendered on the 30th, when the allied sovereigns entered in triumph, amid the acclamations of those many who had wearied of the tyranny of the empire. Alexander, riding between the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria's representative, Count Schwarzenberg, was the cynosure of all eyes, as much because of his magnanimous attitude towards the conquered city, as on account of his striking appearance.

A few days later, Napoleon signed an unconditional surrender of his throne and was conceded the sov-

ereignty of Elba, with a large revenue, a bodyguard of 400 men and the retention of his imperial title. This lenient sentence was entirely due to the generous advocacy of Alexander and was strongly opposed by the English envoy, who foresaw the inevitable result. The Bourbon dynasty was restored, and in May, by the Treaty of Paris, France surrendered all her conquests and accepted the boundaries of 1792. For the further settlement of European questions it was agreed that a congress of the Powers should meet at Vienna in the course of the year, and in June the Tsar paid a State visit to England before returning to Russia.

He was enthusiastically received by his subjects, who were proud of his continental prestige. In recognition of his services they begged his acceptance of a public monument and the title of "Blessed of Heaven." But with characteristic modesty Alexander declined these honours. He attributed "the events which have put an end to the sanguinary wars in Europe, to the work of the Almighty alone," and requested that all preparations for his triumphal entry into Petersburg might be abandoned.

Three months later he again quitted Russia for Vienna, to take part in the international congress which was to settle the fate of Europe. With him were the Grand Duke Constantine, Prince Adam Czartoryski, representing the interests of Poland, and Count Nesselrode, who had superseded Rumantsov as minister for foreign affairs. Ostensibly the arbiter of the continental destinies and pre-eminent among the foreign potentates who thronged the Austrian capital, Alexander maintained his habitual modesty and gentleness. He solved the difficult problem of precedence by arranging that, as the youngest monarch present, he should be placed last, and he won the admiration of Lamartine, who refers to him as "the young and modest Agamemnon of this Court of kings."

The Congress opened with a round of fêtes and gaiety. Outwardly all was harmony ; but the divergent interests of the various nations and the intrigues of Talleyrand and Metternich, who really ruled the council, led to discord among the plenipotentiaries, so that before long Europe was once more upon the verge of war. Alexander, who was anxious to atone for his grandmother's political crimes and to gratify the patriotic aspirations of Czartoryski, wished to annex the whole of Poland as a dependency of Russia and to establish it as an autonomous State. He was prepared at the same time to compensate Prussia for the loss of her Polish provinces with the kingdom of Saxony. England, Austria and France, however, were opposed to this project as likely to augment the influence of the Northern Powers unduly and to undermine the "principle of legitimacy" by depriving the king of Saxony of his throne. Alexander, with the obstinacy of a weak nature, refused to give way, and, breaking off all further intercourse with Metternich, he threatened to possess himself of Poland by force.

In January 1815, therefore, a secret alliance was formed, by which England, Austria and France bound themselves at all costs to oppose the demands of Russia and Prussia. War seemed imminent, when the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba once more united Europe against the public enemy. In face of the common danger all differences were put aside and a series of compromises brought the Congress of Vienna to a satisfactory close. Russia received the greater part of Poland, but consented to cede Thorn and the province of Posen to Prussia ; while, to compensate her for her Polish losses, Prussia obtained a third of Saxony and the fertile province of the Rhine.

The Powers then renewed the alliance against France, and devoted all their available resources to crushing the disturber of the continental peace.

Alexander contributed 167,000 men to the armies of the Coalition, and announced his determination to sacrifice "his last man and his last rouble" to the destruction of Napoleon. He was prepared to take the field himself; but an attack of erysipelas, to which he was subject, detained him at Vienna, and it was not until 4th June that he reached Heilbron, on his way to join his forces at the front. His illness and the fatigues of his journey had left him tired and depressed, sensitively aware that Europe considered his ill-judged clemency towards Napoleon to have renewed the continental war, while the Congress of Vienna had opened his eyes to the fact that, in spite of his conciliatory intentions, the courts of England, Austria and France regarded him with aversion and distrust. His own subjects, moreover, resented his continued absences abroad, and the prospect of another war with France excited universal discontent in Russia, where the financial and mercantile conditions were already bad. Such was his frame of mind when the mystical Baroness Juliana von Kruedener presented herself at his lodging late at night and demanded an audience.

This remarkable woman, half mountebank, half saint, was of noble Russian birth, and in her youth had been famous for her beauty, her talents and her love affairs. Before she was eighteen, she had married the German Baron von Kruedener, a diplomatist then occupying a prominent post at the court of Berlin. But the pair had nothing in common; and while some biographers tell us that the lovely and fascinating Juliana deserted her elderly husband for the charms of a young French officer, others say that her indiscretions obliged the Baron to return her to her family soon after the marriage. Be that as it may, on the death of the Baron, in 1802, his widow apparently repented of her frivolity. She renounced the world, adopted a religious life and the tenets of the Sweden-

borgians, and devoted herself to the conversion of sinners, while she preached celibacy, self-denial and the speedy coming of the millennium, to all who would listen. She made many converts, and Madame de Genlis—who probably understood her—pronounced her to be "extraordinarily interesting and undoubtedly sincere." In 1814, Madame de Kruedener—then in her fiftieth year—went to Baden, where she met the Margravine and her daughter the Tsaritsa Elizabeth, to whom she confided the fact that, "by order of God Himself," she had a mission to the Tsar. The Empress seems to have been impressed by the statement, and accordingly endeavoured to effect the meeting between her husband and the prophetess, which eventually took place at Heilbron.

Such was the woman who for the next five years was destined to exercise so great an influence over the mind and actions of the Tsar. That their relations should give rise to misconception and ridicule was inevitable in that age of calumny and scepticism; but Alexander was too simple-minded to imagine that evil motives could be imputed to his feeling for an elderly woman, thirteen years his senior, whom he regarded with the reverential affection of a disciple and a son. Fond as he was of ladies' society, Alexander was no sybarite, and his *liaison* with the beautiful Mme Naryshkin had remained the solitary expression of his intense yearning for the love and domestic companionship denied him by his wife. His abiding remorse for the tragedy of 1801, moreover, had increased his tendency to melancholy and superstition, and he had long sought peace of mind in religion. Madame de Kruedener and her doctrines seemed to offer him the strength and consolation he desired; while her prophecies anent himself, as "the fair angel destined by God to be the saviour of the world," restored his self-respect and his belief in his own ideals.

Alexander's part in the Hundred Days was small. His troops were not present at Waterloo, and he did not reach Paris till 10th July, three days after the allied forces had entered the capital. Madame de Kruedener followed him to Paris and established herself in an adjoining house, where she held constant prayer-meetings for the benefit of her imperial convert and for the members of the fashionable and political world who flocked to hear her.

By the second Treaty of Paris, Louis XVIII was once more restored to his throne and, through the intervention of the Tsar, with practically undiminished territory. France, however, was compelled to pay a large indemnity and to restore all the works of art taken from other nations by Napoleon. At the same time the Quadruple Alliance between Russia, Austria, England and Prussia was signed, by which those four States pledged themselves to unite in defence of the Bourbon dynasty in France and of the peace and prosperity of Europe.

It was then, that Alexander proposed the adoption by the Great Powers of that fantastic scheme which is known as the Holy Alliance and which was the outcome of his own unpractical dreams and the spiritual exaltation of Madame de Kruedener. By basing international politics upon the precepts of the Bible, kings were to become as brothers to each other and as fathers to their people, while nations were to "exercise themselves daily more and more in the duties and precepts taught by the divine Saviour to mankind." In other words, subjects were to be ruled according to the teaching of the Gospel, but monarchs were to unite in defence of their divine rights and in opposition to the liberal doctrines which might threaten their prerogatives. Such was the celebrated project which was intended to revolutionise diplomacy and to promote a new era of peace and righteousness on earth.

Frederick William of Prussia accepted it in all seriousness ; Francis of Austria, having first received Metternich's assurance that the document was "mere verbiage," signed, though with some reluctance ; France, Spain, Naples and Sardinia subscribed to it with a smile ; but England, regarding the scheme as visionary, refused to participate, while Turkey and the Papal States were purposely excluded.

Having, as he hoped, based the peace of Europe upon sure foundations and arranged for a series of international conferences in the near future, Alexander quitted Paris and returned to his own land. Madame de Kruedener also left France and went to Switzerland, where her teaching attracted much attention. But the liberality of her views alarmed the Swiss Government, so that in 1818 she was obliged to move on into Russia. Her friendship with the Tsar still continued ; through her influence he had repudiated Madame Naryshkin and become fully reconciled to his wife, from whom he had long been estranged. In 1821, however, Madame de Kruedener's enthusiastic championship of the oppressed Greeks offended the Emperor and put an end to the good understanding between them. In an autograph letter eight pages long, Alexander defended his inaction against Turkey ; and then, blaming the freedom with which his Egeria "censured his Government, added to the embarrassments of his ministers and fomented agitations round his throne," he informed her that he could no longer permit her presence in his capital unless she amended her ways. Madame de Kruedener, preferring exile to silence, withdrew to the Crimea, where she preached Christianity to the Mahommedans, and died in 1824.

Throughout the remainder of his reign, Alexander occupied himself mainly with the administration and inspection of his vast dominions.

One of his first acts after his return to Russia was

to visit Warsaw, where he confirmed the liberties he had guaranteed to Poland at the Congress of Vienna, and formally proclaimed the nation's reinstatement as an autonomous State, with himself at its head. The constitution of 1791, abolished by Catherine the Great, was restored, and the Government was confided exclusively to those whose Polish proclivities would, it was hoped, make them universally acceptable to the people. The Grand Duke Constantine, who was on the point of divorcing his first wife—a princess of Saxe-Coburg—and contracting a morganatic marriage with a Polish lady, was appointed commander-in-chief of the Polish army; and the aged patriot Kosciusko, having declined the vice-royalty, it was conferred upon General Zaiconzek—much to the disappointment of Prince Czartoryski, who coveted for himself this honour, instead of the minor post of senator. Under their administration, Poland enjoyed a brief period of peace; but ultimately the uncompromising military despotism of Zaiconzek and the Grand Duke exasperated the people and led to the formation of secret societies and political conspiracies which embittered the Emperor's last years and paved the way to the insurrection of 1831.

The religious revival then agitating Europe spread to Russia. The British and Foreign Bible Society established itself at Petersburg, and in the course of a few years had issued 50,000 theological works in fifty different languages. As many as forty different sects arose, who were offshoots of the Raskolniki and were characterised by de Maistre, the French envoy, as "fanatical and obstinate . . . productive of a mad and dangerous tribe of dissenters." Chief among these different denominations were the Molokanes of Southern Russia, who corresponded to the Evangelicals of our own land, and the Doukhobortzi or "Spirit Wrestlers," whose doctrines resembled those of the Society of

Friends, although the extravagance of their practices often merited the strictures of de Maistre.

Encouraged by the Tsar, philanthropy became the fashion of the day. Amongst other schemes of social reform, a Society for the Welfare of Prisoners was founded at Petersburg and Moscow, through the efforts of an Englishman named Venning, who obtained permission to visit and report upon the conditions of the Russian gaols.

Taking advantage of religious toleration in Russia, the Society of Jesus had gained a firm foothold, and, besides making numerous converts among all classes of society, it threatened the security of the Greek faith by publicly proclaiming that Roman Catholicism was "the only one true and sure religion for salvation." At last, in 1816, in response to the protests of the Orthodox clergy, an imperial ukase banished the Jesuits from the capital and eventually from the empire.

This marks the beginning of Alexander's reaction against the liberal theories of his early years—the commencement of the "Araktchéevtchina," as it was called, when the pernicious influence of Araktchéev and his colleagues gained complete ascendency over the mind of the erstwhile "friend of humanity." The fight against enlightenment had begun and reform, liberalism and progress were to be gradually repressed. Araktchéev has been characterised by M. Rambaud as "the born enemy of all new ideas and all thoughts of reform; the apostle of absolute power and passive obedience." He soon made himself indispensable to his master, and for the remainder of the reign he practically ruled the empire, during which time he revived many obsolete restrictions and made his name for ever synonymous with oppression.

The enlightened Prince Golitsin was forced to resign, and was replaced as Minister of Education by

Admiral Shishkov, whose dislike of elementary education and of all liberal ideas was well known. Magnitski, a "converted atheist," controlled the universities and inaugurated a system of repression calculated to stifle all independent thought, as well as all growth of intellectual and scientific life. Under his administration, several professors were dismissed for indulging in scientific research and for failing to teach "in accordance with the doctrines of the Holy Alliance," while the works of writers such as Newton, Buffon and Grotius, were forbidden as contrary to the Scriptures. The censorship of the press was revived, the activities of the Bible societies were checked, dissent was no longer tolerated and western culture was forbidden.

The most unpopular of all Araktchéev's measures was the creation of the military colonies, of which scheme, however, the Tsar claimed to be the originator. By this system, soldiers were quartered upon the peasantry in certain districts, and would thus, it was hoped, continue their military training, while at the same time contributing to their own support and to the national prosperity by their agricultural labours. Intermarriage with the peasants was enforced, the children being dedicated to the army at birth, thus increasing the number of recruits and encouraging the growth of a military nation. The colonists were subject to military government and to a harsh and exacting despotism which affected every detail of their domestic life and drove them to frequent insurrections, which were suppressed with ruthless severity.

Alexander's foreign policy found expression in the continental conferences which were held biennially in accordance with the agreement at Paris and which he attended in person with unfailing regularity. At Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1818, where it was decided to withdraw the foreign armies of occupation from France and to renew the Quadruple Alliance of 1815 between

the four Powers concerned, Alexander succumbed to the influence of Metternich, then predominant in the councils of Europe, and prime mover in the reactionary policy of the various States. As the champion of liberalism, Alexander was at first proof against his arguments, but the vacillating mentality of the Tsar was no match for the Machiavellian reasoning of the great statesman. Yielding to Metternich's doctrine that "no part of Europe should depart from the *status quo* and that the divine right of kings must be defended against all innovations," Alexander developed into an autocrat as absolute as any of his predecessors. Metternich, who maintained that the Tsar underwent "a periodical evolution of mind" every few years, fully understood the plastic nature with which he had to deal and profited by Alexander's disappointment at the failure of his schemes for Poland and the Holy Alliance, to convert him to the belief that, by repressing the popular demand for free institutions, he was "hindering the rule of evil" and upholding the principle of legitimacy, or the divine right of kings.

In the following year, Alexander's reactionary tendencies were strengthened by the murder of Kotzebue, then acting as Russian agent in Central Germany and popularly supposed to have conduced to the Tsar's desertion of the democratic cause. At the Congress of Troppau in 1820, his disillusionment was completed by the news that his favourite regiment, the Semeonovski Guards, had mutinied at Petersburg. The intelligence reached him at a moment when he was boasting to the Congress of Russian immunity from revolutionary disturbances, and filled his cup of bitterness to overflowing. "I see that you are right," he said to Metternich, "liberalism is a malady of human nature that we must cure." Thenceforward, Alexander threw himself heart and soul into the absolutist policy of his mentor.

Napoleon, mistaking indecision for deceit, once declared the Tsar to be "as false as a Byzantine Greek"; but, on the whole, the animadversion was unjust. Alexander's intentions were always good, though he lacked "the unbroken consistency and unity of aim" which we are told is the mark of greatness and by which alone he could have achieved his ideals. His moral lapses were rare; and if he so far lent himself to Metternich's unscrupulous diplomacy as to countenance the sale to Spain of a fleet of ships so rotten as to be useless, we must remember that it was an age of political fraud and that Russian vessels were proverbially unseaworthy.

At Metternich's instigation, and with the connivance of Russia, Austria and Prussia, the spirit of the Holy Alliance was changed, to become avowedly one of collective aggression against all forms of national aspiration. At the Congress of Laibach in 1821, and again at Verona in 1822, the three Powers consented readily to Metternich's policy of repressing liberalism in Italy and Spain and of censuring the action of the Greeks, who, in 1821, had risen in revolt against the manifold oppressions of the Porte.

The struggle began in 1820, when the Hæteria Philike (a secret "association of friends") organised a rising of the Greeks in the Danubian provinces against Moslem tyranny, with the object of driving the Turks out of Europe and of re-establishing the Byzantine empire. Count Capodistrias, a Greek, and at that time Foreign Minister of Russia, was invited to put himself at their head; but he declined, and the insurgents chose Prince Ypsilanti in his stead. Ypsilanti, whose grandfather had been Hospodar of Wallachia, was brave but incapable. He entered Jassy and advanced against Bucharest; but he was defeated at Rymnik and forced to flee to Austria, where he was imprisoned. The Hæterists, deprived of their leader

and disavowed by Russia, were gradually dispersed, and the revolt ended in total failure.

Their example of rebellion was followed by the Greeks of Morea and the Ægean Islands in the great national rising which stirred the sympathies of Lord Byron and of all liberal Europe, and which, for the next seven years, was to witness some of the most appalling atrocities of which the oriental mind is capable. Regarded by both nations as a holy war, the insurrection developed into a crusade between the two creeds and led to a series of retaliatory massacres which horrified the whole civilised world. The assassination of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was dragged from the altar and hanged in his sacred robes at the entrance to his church, roused universal indignation, and all Russia clamoured for war against the murderers of their co-religionists. Alexander, however, persuaded by Metternich that the Greek struggle was one of rebellion against the legitimate authority of their lawful prince, refused to act. Beyond protesting against the worst outrages of the Turks, he continued to sacrifice the interests and prestige of his empire to his dreams of international peace.

His apathetic attitude towards the Christians of the East, coupled with his reactionary policy, estranged the affections of his people and embittered his last years. Freemasonry, long forbidden in Russia, once more permeated the empire ; secret republican societies for the spread of liberalism and the abolition of despotism, sprang up on all sides and were joined by many members of the aristocracy. Plots to assassinate the Tsar were frequent; while the Society of the South, under the leadership of Colonel Pestel, who was once a page at the imperial court, openly advocated regicide and the necessity of exterminating the Romanov dynasty. Details of the conspiracy were put into the Emperor's hands; but he took no notice, merely

owning that he was " tired of the world, and had lost all illusions and belief in the gratitude and affection of humanity." He spoke often of abdicating in favour of his brother Nicholas, and, although only forty-eight, he longed to retire from a world where he had been so grievously misunderstood.

The gloom that overshadowed his life deepened, and the great flood which devastated Petersburg in 1824 was generally regarded as a mark of divine displeasure at Russia's inaction in Greece, though the Tsar accepted the disaster as a punishment for the sins of his youth. Aware of the popular resentment and a prey to a morbid melancholy at the thought of his lost illusions, Alexander grew suspicious and morose, and, withdrawing more and more into himself, he rarely emerged from his solitude, except to take part in the religious and philanthropic ceremonies which constituted his chief interest and consolation in life.

In the autumn of 1825, he went on a tour of inspection through his southern provinces, accompanied by the Empress Elizabeth, for the sake of whose health the Emperor proposed to make a short stay at Taganrog. There, however, he developed a kind of low fever, contracted during his journey, and aggravated by his own imprudence and by the fatigues of those arduous public duties which his sense of his obligations to his people never permitted him to relax. After a brief illness, he died at Taganrog on 1st December 1825, and was buried with his ancestors in the Petrapavlovski Cathedral at Petersburg.

For nearly a hundred years nothing occurred to discredit this statement. Owing to the distance from the capital, the usual lying-in-state was omitted, and the deceased emperor's body was placed in a sealed coffin and carried northwards by slow stages, to be buried with all the customary ceremonial. It was whispered among the people that the Tsar was not

really dead and would one day return to rule over them once more; but among the superstitious Russian peasantry, the legend was common to every popular hero, so that little importance was attached to the belief. Gradually, however, these rumours centred in the person of a mysterious hermit—or rather recluse—named Fedor Kusmitch, who dwelt alone in the recesses of one of the Siberian forests. Who this hermit really was and how he came there, has never transpired, nor is it likely at this distance of time that his identity will ever be discovered. But that he was a person of importance, is proved by the fact that the Emperor Nicholas often visited him to ask his advice on matters of State and invariably treated him with the utmost respect and reverence.

In the summer of 1922, by order of the Petrograd Soviet, all the imperial tombs in the Petrapavlovski Cathedral were opened and the coffins searched, in the hope of finding jewels and other treasure. The Soviet gained nothing by this desecration, but it established the fact that the white marble sarcophagus of Alexander I contained nothing but an empty coffin, still sealed with the Taganrog seals, but filled with lead. The discovery sheds much light on the reluctance to assume the crown which so nearly cost Nicholas I his throne.

" The character of the Emperor Alexander," wrote the French ambassador of the time, " becomes daily more and more of an enigma to me. . . . One leaves his presence in the conviction that he combines in his own person all the best qualities of a truly chivalric and noble-minded monarch with those of a man of deep feeling . . . and extraordinary energy. . . . Yet the whole history of his life and what we all daily see and hear, make it impossible and even dangerous to put any trust in him, or his words. The weakness betrayed in so many of his actions, shows clearly that

the strength and energy which he puts into his speech, have never found a place in his character. Owing to this weakness of character, he is quickly excited and roused to sudden energy, and then he comes to violent decisions, of which the results cannot be calculated. . . . Yet this Prince, (at least, so it seems to me) is, in the full acceptation of the word, one of the most estimable men I know. Evil is mingled with the good in his deeds, but his will and intentions are always on the side of the latter."

In spite of the sterilising effect of the Araktchéevtchina, the reign of Alexander I was favourable to literature and marks a time of great intellectual progress. The imperial library at Petersburg was opened to the public ; newspapers, literary and political reviews flourished and multiplied ; science advanced. Captains Lisianski and Krusenstern made the first Russian voyage round the world ; Captain Kotzebué explored the Oceans of the North and South, and the theory that Asia was joined to America was finally disproved.

Among authors, Nicholas Karamsin wrote a *History of the Russian Empire*, which, if somewhat uncritical and imperialistic in its assertions, is remarkable for the brilliance and charm of its style. Ozérov composed classical and historical tragedies ; Krilov wrote fables and comedies, as did Griboiedov, whose comedy *Grief out of Wit*, was acclaimed by the nation, though forbidden by the censor. Batiushkov and Zhukovski were poets, the latter of whom translated numerous English and German poems into Russian verse, and endeavoured to familiarise his countrymen with the gems of foreign poetical literature. Derzhavin still lived, and Pushkin had begun to write, but his most important works belong to a later date, and he is generally regarded as the chief ornament of the reign of Nicholas I.

CHAPTER X

NICHOLAS I

1825–1855

On the death of Alexander I, the rightful heir to the throne was the Grand Duke Constantine; but the latter, on his marriage to the Polish Countess Grudzinska (who was a Roman Catholic), had renounced his claims in favour of his younger brother Nicholas, and had deposited the manifesto sanctioning this resolution in the Uspenski Cathedral at Moscow, where its existence was known to few. Nicholas seems to have been kept in ignorance of this fact, and, when shown the document embodying his brother's abdication, he refused to accept it as valid. As soon, therefore, as the news of Alexander's death reached the capital, he at once ordered the accession of Constantine to be proclaimed, and prepared to take the oath of allegiance himself. On the other hand, Constantine, who was at Warsaw, formally renewed his renunciation and declared Nicholas emperor in his stead. Three weeks passed in this generous struggle between the two brothers, and not until 25th December did Nicholas, at Constantine's command, consent to accept the crown and to issue the manifesto announcing his brother's abdication and his own accession.

The interregnum had been turned to good account by the disaffected of the last reign. The two secret societies of the North and South, headed respectively

by Prince Troubetzkoi and by Colonel Pestel, seized the opportunity to attempt a *coup d'état* by which they hoped to overthrow the Romanovs and to establish a Republican Government in Russia. Many army officers joined the plot; and when, on 26th December, the troops in Petersburg were assembled to take the customary oath of allegiance to the new sovereign, some of the regiments, at the instigation of their officers, refused to do so. In their ignorance, the common soldiers believed that Nicholas was an usurper, that Constantine was a prisoner at Moscow, and that the "Constitution," for which they were told to shout, was the name of Constantine's wife.

All efforts to induce the mutineers to listen to reason proved vain. Their aspect became hourly more threatening; other regiments showed signs of joining the insurrection and it was feared that the civil population would presently be involved. Nicholas himself advanced to harangue the mutineers; both he and the Metropolitan of Moscow risked their lives in a futile endeavour to persuade the soldiers to return to barracks, for several officers of high rank were shot by their own men, and amongst them General Miloradovitch, the hero of a hundred Napoleonic battles, who fell mortally wounded by a bullet. Throughout the day, the disaffected regiments remained massed in a solid square in front of the Senate House and resisted all efforts to dislodge them. At last, towards evening, Nicholas ordered the artillery into action. The first few rounds of grape-shot instantly dispersed the rioters and brought the Northern, or Decembrist (Dekabrist) conspiracy, as it is called, to a sudden end.

The insurrection of the South was more formidable, because better organised. The conspirators captured Vassilkov and marched on Kiev; but they were eventually defeated at the village of Oustimovka by

General Geismar, and nearly all the leaders were taken prisoners.

Under the presidency of the Tsar, a commission of inquiry was established, which sat for seven months and made a thorough investigation of the plot, thereby exposing many Government abuses which were afterwards abolished. In all, 240 conspirators were tried, the majority of them being young and inexperienced men of high rank. Many were acquitted, but 121 were convicted and more or less severely punished, according to the extent of their complicity. The five ringleaders — Colonel Pestel, Colonel Sergius Mouraviev-Apostol, Ryleyev, the poet, Lieutenant Bestuzhev-Ryumin, and Lieutenant Kakhovski, the assassin of Miloradovitch—were condemned to be quartered, though the Tsar afterwards commuted their sentence to hanging. All five were men of noble character and lofty aspirations who, in the words of one of their number, " were deceived by the zeal of their patriotism and the love of their country." Strong in the purity of their intentions, they met death with a dignified courage which sustained them to the end, in spite of the fact that, owing to the clumsiness of the executioner, the ropes broke, and three of the victims fell to the ground, to undergo a second time the mental and physical anguish of their sentence. Prince Troubetzkoi, the leader of the North — who spent 25th December in ignominious hiding and to whose treachery and cowardice the conspirators attributed the failure of the enterprise—was accorded a contemptuous pardon, and, whenever possible, Nicholas showed the utmost clemency to the remainder of the culprits. Five only suffered the supreme penalty ; the sentences of the others were mitigated in every case, and such as were banished to Siberia and the provinces, were permitted the consolatory presence of their wives and families.

The Dekabrist conspiracy left an indelible impression upon the Emperor's mind, fatal both for the nation and for his own character. The plot marked the beginning of that unending struggle for political emancipation which was to cost Russia the blood of the noblest of her sons; and the Tsar, dimly recognising it as such, determined to crush the spirit of reaction at its birth. "Revolution," he wrote to his brother, "stands at the gates of Russia, but it will never penetrate further as long as I live."

Born in 1796, twenty years after his eldest brother, Nicholas' education had been conducted under the auspices, not of Catherine the Great, but of Paul I, so that he had been early imbued with the passion for military minutiæ—the hatred of liberalism and progress, which characterised the latter monarch. Military discipline and the divine right of kings constituted the new emperor's articles of faith, to the preservation of which he devoted all the forces of his narrow, obstinate, strong-willed nature. His great height and imposing appearance, always buttoned into tight military uniform, were in keeping with his austere personality; and though the happiness of his marriage to Princess Charlotte of Prussia and the birth of his eldest son Alexander in 1819 had somewhat softened the rigours of a naturally harsh and unbending disposition, Nicholas, both in public and private life, was a rigid martinet. He regarded obedience to authority as the whole duty of man, and, as Autocrat of All the Russias, he was determined to impose this belief upon the nation. Sincerely anxious to promote the welfare of his people, he was convinced that only in submission to his will could their happiness be found, and regarding himself as the divinely appointed arbiter of the national destinies he tolerated no question as to the infallibility of his decrees.

In August 1826, a few weeks after the execution of

the Dekabrist leaders, Nicholas was crowned at Moscow, and, for the first time, felt himself to be really established upon the throne.

A summary of the popular grievances had been compiled from the confiscated Dekabrist papers for his guidance. The memorandum showed that the civil administration of the empire was deplorable, that the heavy taxes and the State monopolies of salt and alcohol added to the national burdens and that the corruption and extortions of the Government officials were more than sufficient cause for the universal discontent. Nicholas entertained a whole-hearted admiration for his predecessor and for the principles of the Holy Alliance; but as he was less visionary and more sincere than Alexander I, he did not fail to perceive the grave abuses which had sprung up under the latter's rule. Attributing these to his brother's quixotic innovations and resolute to avoid the same errors, Nicholas set himself to redress the national grievances in accordance with his own limited conception of a benevolent Government and with the principles of his Coronation Manifesto, in which he announced that "the statutes of the land are to be gradually perfected, the faults corrected, the abuses remedied, not by insolent dreams of destruction, but from above."

Araktchéev and Magnitski were dismissed, but Speranski was recalled, with permission to continue the codification of the laws which he had begun in 1810, and which he ultimately completed in 1830, as "The Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire." Under the direction of this energetic minister, the principle of primogeniture was re-established, at the discretion of the head of each family; the fleet and the military colonies were reorganised; the prisons were placed upon a military footing and governed accordingly. The growing ambitions of the

middle classes were propitiated by the creation of a "bourgeois aristocracy" with special privileges and with graduated ranks based upon educational qualifications, somewhat resembling the "Tchin" or degrees of nobility, based on public service, which had been instituted by Peter the Great.

With the imperial approval, many serfs were liberated by their masters and, later, were enabled by statute to purchase their own freedom; while in the case of a bankrupt landowner, the serfs were permitted to buy the estate collectively and to parcel it out amongst themselves. The lot of the peasants on the Crown lands was much improved, and Count Kissilev—who was appointed to look after their welfare—effected many important reforms in the sanitary, educational and agricultural conditions of the poor. They were also permitted, for the first time, a voice in the public affairs of their own rural district. Commercial facilities were increased by the construction of a canal between the Volga and the Don, as well as by the opening of the first Russian railway. But the utility of the latter was somewhat circumscribed, for the Tsar, alarmed at the innovation, determined its route himself, by drawing on the map a straight line with a ruler from Petersburg to Moscow and carefully avoiding the inclusion of any other towns of importance, or any means of connecting Russia with the West.

Nicholas and Speranski were at one as regarded the material welfare of the empire, but they held widely divergent views on matters connecting its intellectual development. The Emperor's dread of liberalism caused him to distrust western culture and general education, as mainly responsible for the spread of republican free-thought in Russia; accordingly both were sternly repressed. Military academies were encouraged and a certain number of "professorial institutes" were created, for the training of native

teachers who would free Russia from the pernicious influence of the West. But elementary education was checked, the number of students at the universities was strictly limited, the study of theology and philosophy was forbidden (except as taught by the Orthodox priests in the Ecclesiastical Academy) and Russian subjects replaced foreign languages and foreign literature in the schools. Foreign travel and residence abroad were restricted and study at western universities was forbidden, except in the case of jurisprudence, a concession necessitated by the lack of qualified native lawyers.

A vigorous press censorship was established, which involved the manuscript of every book and of every newspaper article throughout the realm, while it condemned many an author convicted of liberal tendencies, to banishment or the mines. Nevertheless, in spite of these unfavourable conditions, literature flourished and the mental life of the nation continued to develop on purely Russian lines. Pushkin, the first and greatest of Russian poets, was at the zenith of his power. Lermontov produced his exquisite lyrics; Koltsov and Nikitin, both products of the people, like so many of their contemporaries, wrote lyrics in the ballad style, which obtained a great popularity among their countrymen. Bielinski, foremost among Russian critics, wrote for *The Observer* and for other journals. Polévoi, Sergius Soloviev, Kostomarov and Ustrialov, all published histories of their own land, which have become standard works. The drama was represented by Ostrovski, and Glinka produced the first Russian opera with his "A Life for the Tsar." Under the pseudonym of Iskander, Alexander Herzen, the famous publicist, issued his political skit, "Who is to Blame," which embroiled him with the Government; and other novelists of repute include Lazhecknikov and Zagoskin, who belong to the romanticist school of Sir Walter

Scott. But chief among the fictionists of this period are Ivan Turganiev, Count Leo Tolstoi, Gontcharov, Dostoievski and the inimitable Gogol, who, like Thackeray and Dickens, have all obtained a world-wide reputation by their power in portraying the life of their own country.

An earnest though bigoted Christian of the Orthodox Church, Nicholas showed none of his predecessor's toleration towards alien religions, and under General Protassov, the Procurator or lay head of the Holy Synod, he inaugurated a ruthless campaign against all forms of dissent. The progress of the Roman Catholic Church was checked and its property confiscated; the British Bible Society suffered a like fate, and was bidden to return to England; four and a half million Greek Catholics or "Uniates" were forced to re-enter the Orthodox Church, and propaganda, compulsion, grants of land or money effected the conversion of some 100,000 proselytes in the Baltic Provinces.

To protect the welfare of the realm and to eradicate reactionary thought, a secret police was established under the direction of Count Benckendorf, with instructions to exterminate political heresy wherever it might be found. This "Third Division," as it was called, to distinguish it from other departments controlled by the Imperial Chancellory, exercised a close supervision over every detail of the national life and earned the hatred of all classes of society by its unwelcome espionage and arbitrary power.

Anxious though Nicholas was to uphold the pacific policy of his predecessor, his administration did not make for peace and his reign was one of constant disturbance both at home and abroad. In the south, the frontier question had long been a fruitful source of disagreement with Persia, and in the summer of 1826, the encroachments of Yermalov, the Russian governor-general of the Caucasus, brought matters to a head.

Abbas Mirza, the Prince-Royal of Persia, with a large army, crossed the Araxes and threatened Tiflis, but was defeated at Elizabetopol and on the Djéham. In 1827, Paskiévitch, the Russian commander-in-chief, entered Persian territory, captured the important strongholds of Erivan and Tauris and prepared to march on Teheran. Unable to oppose his advance, the Shah sued for peace, and in February 1828 concluded the Treaty of Turkmanchai, by which he agreed to accept the River Araxes as the boundary between the two States; to cede the provinces of Erivan and Nakhitchevan (now Armenia) to Russia; to recognise Russian protection of the Armenian Church; to pay an indemnity and to accord important commercial privileges to Russian traders. In the following year, a massacre of the Russian legation at Teheran—including the poet Griboiedov—all but renewed the war, which, however, was averted by the personal intervention of the Prince-Royal. Thenceforward, friendly relations between the two countries remained undisturbed, and Russian influence was paramount in Persia.

The Greek War of Liberation continued, Nicholas viewed the struggle with little sympathy, as the rebellion of a democratic people against legitimate authority; but the voice, not of Europe only, but of his own subjects and his own conscience, urged him, as the head of the Greek Church, to interfere on behalf of his oppressed co-religionists. Moreover, it was desirable, from a commercial as well as a humanitarian point of view, to put an end to the conflict, so that in July 1827, by the Treaty of London, Russia, England and France bound themselves to rescue Greece from Turkish tyranny. Renouncing all territorial and mercantile advantages in the East for themselves, the three Powers called upon the belligerents to accept their mediation and to agree to an armistice; after which Greece was to

become an autonomous State under Turkish suzerainty, and the Mahommedan population was to be removed from the Morea on payment of an adequate indemnity.

In October 1826, by a separate convention at Akkerman, Russia had already demanded the evacuation and autonomy of the Danubian provinces, free passage to Russian vessels from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and complete fulfilment of the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest. To these latter conditions the Sultan had agreed under protest, but he unhesitatingly rejected the ultimatum of London, as "violating the passive obedience owed by subjects to their legitimate sovereign." In consequence, the Greeks were forced to continue the war, and the Mediterranean squadrons of the Allied Powers arrived off the coast of Morea to their assistance. Under the supreme command of Admiral Codrington a brilliant victory was won by the united fleets at Navarino, in October 1827; Ibrahim Pasha was compelled to withdraw from the peninsula and the liberation of Greece was assured.

But the defeat only served to exasperate the Sultan. Relying on Austrian support, he assumed a high tone towards the three Powers and demanded instant reparation for the insult to his flag. He also repudiated the Treaty of Akkerman as having been extorted by compulsion, and he proclaimed a holy war against Russia as mainly responsible for the Greek insurrection and for other religious disturbances in the Ottoman empire. A continental conflagration seemed imminent, when the policy of Great Britain was changed by the death of Mr Canning, who had been the prime mover in the Treaty of London. Save for aid in Greece from a French army corps under General Maison, Russia was then left to continue hostilities alone.

This Nicholas was quite willing to do, provided that

he received guarantees of neutrality from the other European Powers ; and, having obtained satisfactory assurances on this point, he declared war on the Porte in April 1828. He chose a moment when the Turkish forces were weakened by the revolt and subsequent destruction of the Janissaries, to attack on a double front ; one army under Field Marshal Wittgenstein crossed the Pruth, while another under Paskiévitch entered Asia Minor. At first all went well. Paskiévitch was uniformly successful in Asia, while in the west, the Russians occupied Wallachia and Moldavia, captured Ibraila and reduced Varna after a prolonged siege. But the military organisation of Russia was bad. Supplies failed, sickness devastated the troops and Wittgenstein was old and past his work, besides being hampered by the presence and constant interference of the Tsar. The sieges of Shumla and Silistria both failed, and in the winter, the invaders withdrew to Jassy, with enormous losses and impaired prestige.

In the spring, the campaign was renewed with more success, for the Emperor was determined not to permit " the follies and mistakes of last year to be repeated." Diebitsch assumed supreme command, unhampered by the presence of his sovereign, and, in spite of the numerical inferiority of his army, he took Silistria, blockaded Shumla, inflicted a severe defeat on the Grand Vizier at Kulevtscha and entered Adrianople. He then prepared to march on Constantinople, which, owing to the presence of a Russian fleet in the Black Sea, was already threatened with famine. Meanwhile, in Asia, Paskiévitch had captured Kars and other fortified places and occupied Erzeroum. Menaced on all sides, the Sultan made overtures for peace, and the Treaty of Adrianople was signed in September 1829. By this the Porte agreed to recognise the autonomy of Greece ; to adhere to the terms of the

Convention of Akkerman; to open the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to foreign merchant vessels; to pay an indemnity to Russia; and to acknowledge the Tsar's right to protect all Orthodox Christians.

Greek independence was thus secured and a popular Government was established under the presidency of the ex-Russian minister, Capodistrias. But the assassination of the President in 1831 compelled the Powers again to intervene, and in 1833 Greece became a hereditary kingdom under the rule of Prince Otto of Bavaria.

The year 1830 opened distressfully for Russia, and the Emperor is said to have been filled with gloomy prognostications, which subsequent events at home and abroad more than justified. Cholera appeared in the Caucasian provinces, ravaged the western shores of the Caspian Sea and pursued its way along the banks of the Volga till it had reached Moscow. The Tsar, with noble self-devotion, visited the infected area, and, by his presence among his people, did much to restore calm and to enforce sanitary precautions upon the terror-stricken inhabitants. But at Sebastopol, which was devastated by the plague, an anti-quarantine rebellion led to grave disorders, which culminated in a massacre of government officials.

Revolt was in the air, and the revolution which expelled Charles X from France, spread to Belgium and Central Italy and threatened to plunge Europe into war.

The prevailing unrest found active expression among the Poles, many of whom had been implicated in the Dekabrist conspiracy of 1825; while the autocratic principles of the Tsar and the iron rule of the Grand Duke Constantine were regarded throughout Poland as a direct violation of the Constitution of 1818. Nicholas had been crowned king of Poland, at Warsaw, in 1829; but his intolerance and his disregard of

national prejudices on that occasion, had augmented his unpopularity. Later, he closed the Diet for its temerity in rejecting some of his measures, after which, opposition to his Government became general in Poland and the activities of the secret societies increased.

On the night of 29th November 1830, the smouldering embers of discontent burst into flames. Led by Lieutenant Wysocki, the students of the military college at Warsaw broke into the Russian barracks, seized the ammunition and marched to the Belvedere Palace, where they attempted to capture the Grand Duke Constantine. He escaped by a secret door, but the Polish regiments in Warsaw joined the insurrection almost to a man, and a merciless massacre of Russians and their supporters ensued. The insurgents then took possession of the arsenal and distributed arms to the citizens; after which, finding themselves hopelessly outnumbered, the Grand Duke Constantine and his handful of Russian soldiers withdrew to the village of Wirbza, a few miles outside Warsaw, to wait for reinforcements.

So far, the rising lacked organisation and a head. It was the work of young enthusiasts whose zeal had outrun their discretion, and the futility of the struggle was at once apparent to more sober-minded patriots. To avert further bloodshed, Prince Lubecki, the Minister of Finance, convened the administrative assembly, and, with the assistance of Prince Czartoryski, Prince Radziwill and others, endeavoured to restore order and to placate the offended majesty of Russia. These pacificatory counsels were overruled, however, for popular feeling was averse to a continued acceptance of the Russian yoke. Prince Czartoryski, the friend of Alexander I, then assumed control of affairs, and formed a provisional Government with the aid of the princes Ostrovski and Malakhovski, and the celebrated

professor and historian, Lélével, who represented democracy and the secret societies. The chief military command was given to General Chlopicki, who also advised submission. He therefore despatched Prince Lubecki and Count Ezerski to Petersburg, to solicit the imperial pardon and to tender the national allegiance on condition that the Constitution of 1818 was confirmed; that the provinces of Lithuania and Volhynia were reunited to Poland, and that oblivion of recent events was guaranteed.

Nicholas, however, refused to treat with the rebels. He demanded their immediate and unqualified surrender, and, resentful of their audacity in imposing conditions as the price of their obedience, he announced his intention of answering their overtures by the cannon's mouth and of suppressing the rebellion with the utmost severity.

War was inevitable; the Grand Duke Constantine withdrew to Russia, while Chlopicki accepted the office of dictator and at once began to prepare for the coming invasion. In the session of January 1831, the Diet formally deposed the Romanovs from the throne of Poland and all hopes of a reconciliation were finally destroyed. Chlopicki, however, quarrelled with his colleagues and resigned the dictatorship for a subordinate position in the army. A third provisional Government was formed, under the presidency of Prince Czartoryski; and Prince Radziwill, a sincere patriot, but an indifferent general, assumed command of the Polish army of 90,000 men.

In February, Diebitsch entered Poland at the head of 120,000 men. In spite of a heroic resistance at Grochov and other places, the Poles were outnumbered and compelled to fall back on Warsaw; but they inflicted heavy losses on their opponents, which obliged the Russian general to delay his advance on the capital and to await reinforcements. In March

the Poles were victorious in several minor engagements, but in May they were defeated in a pitched battle at Ostrolenka on the Narev, and with the annihilation of their army, the cause of Polish liberty was lost. Cholera prolonged the war by carrying off Diebitsch and the Grand Duke Constantine, but, as always, internal dissension hastened the ruin of Poland and undermined the authority of her leaders. Radziwill was superseded by Skrzynecki, who gave place in his turn to Dembinski and Malakhovski. Government succeeded Government, and Prince Czartoryski fled in disguise. Civil strife broke out in Warsaw, the streets ran with blood, and though the Diet invested General Krukoviecki with the office of Dictator, he was powerless to control the general anarchy. Helped by munitions from the Prussian arsenals at Königsberg and Dantzig, the Russians crossed the Vistula, and when Paskiévitch—who had succeeded Diebitsch—reached Warsaw, the city capitulated with little or no resistance on 7th September. The remnants of the Polish army surrendered at Plock next day.

Poland lay bleeding and helpless at the feet of her conqueror; but the harsh, unbending disposition of the Emperor Nicholas knew no mercy for a rebellious people. Regarding it as "his bounden duty to prevent a repetition of those mistakes which have given birth to the present sanguinary war," he proceeded to make an example of the nation, with the object of frustrating all such future disturbances in his dominions.

The leaders of the rebellion were imprisoned or banished to Siberia; the Constitution of Alexander I was annulled, and, in 1832, Poland was deprived of her autonomous Government and declared to be a Russian province, subject to Russian laws, Russian taxes and Russian officials. The Polish army was disbanded, the national flag was abolished and the national tongue was forbidden in the schools and Government

offices ; the University of Vilna was closed, Russian provinces replaced the ancient palatinates, and religious persecution expelled the Uniates or Greek Catholics from Poland, Lithuania and White Russia.

The Polish revolution was effectually suppressed, but the after-consequences of war had still to be reckoned with. The dreaded scourge of cholera, which had already devastated Poland and Galicia, spread rapidly northwards to Russia, and in spite of every precaution it attacked Petersburg, Novgorod and other places still further inland. Thousands died of the disease, the victims in Petersburg alone numbering as many as 500 a day ; while fierce riots broke out among the people, who regarded the doctors and plague officials as the authors of the evil and massacred all and sundry in a frenzy of terror.

In the autumn of 1832, the turbulent mountain tribes of the Caucasus and Daghestan revolted against Russian supremacy. Under their chiefs Kasi Mullah and Kamsad Beek, they carried the standard of rebellion through the Caspian provinces, till they were finally defeated and dispersed among the mountain passes of Gimry by General Rosen.

Further west, the warlike Tcherkesses and Abkhasians continued the struggle for independence, and, in spite of the efforts of Yermalov the governor-general, the subjugation of the Circassian provinces was slow of accomplishment. Giorgia proved especially contumacious ; under the famous Schamyl, the Imam or sacred ruler of the land, the province maintained a successful resistance to Russian authority for the next twenty-five years, furtively assisted by the English, whose schooner, the " Vixen," was caught unloading arms on the coast of Abkhasia in 1837.

In the same year (1832), Mahemet Ali, the Viceroy of Egypt, revolted against his suzerain, the Sultan Mahmud, and, having overrun Palestine and Syria,

he crossed the Taurus mountains and threatened the security of Constantinople itself. Unable to check the advance of his audacious vassal, the Sultan appealed to Russia for aid, and Nicholas, glad of an excuse to establish his ascendancy in the East, at once responded by sending a Russian fleet to the Bosphorus and Russian troops across the Pruth. England and France, who were averse to an increase of Russian influence in Turkey, protested loudly against this breach of continental etiquette. Matters assumed a serious aspect; but by the skilful intervention of France, peace between the Sultan and the Khedive was concluded at Kutaya, and Russian assistance became superfluous. Previous to the withdrawal of the Muscovite forces, however, Count Orlov, the Russian envoy, in 1833, succeeded in negotiating the secret treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, by which Russia concluded a defensive alliance with the Porte for a period of eight years, and attained at last to the supremacy in the Near East for which she had so long striven. The two contracting Powers undertook to assist each other to "assure the tranquillity and security" of their dominions by land and sea, while, in the event of an attack on Russia by an European State, the Porte agreed to close the Dardanelles to all foreign vessels and practically resigned the control of the Black Sea to her northern rival.

Subsequent events rendered the treaty abortive; but the indignation of France at finding herself outwitted, knew no bounds—a circumstance which added considerably to the satisfaction of the Tsar, who, as the champion of monarchical authority, cherished an almost fanatical antipathy to the French nation, as a hot-bed of revolution and the refuge of all the politically disaffected in Europe. His dislike of Louis Philippe, in particular, became the governing factor in the Emperor's foreign policy, and he lost no opportunity

of marking his contempt for the citizen-king, the son of Philippe Egalité, the "creature of the people," whom the revolution of 1830 had placed upon the throne of France.

Determined to isolate France from association with the Powers, Nicholas, in 1833, convoked the Conference of Münchengratz, where, in common with the sovereigns of Austria and Prussia, he renewed the pledges of the Holy Alliance and promised armed intervention against revolution wherever it might occur.

When, in 1839, the war between Turkey and Egypt was renewed, the Tsar succeeded in reviving the Quadruple Alliance of 1815 between England, Austria, Prussia and Russia. He thus definitely excluded France from the concert of Europe and from mediation in Eastern affairs, and offered her an insult which all but lead to war. Open rupture was averted, however, for in 1841 the allies forced Mahemet Ali to tender his submission to the Sultan. The Convention of the Straits was concluded between the Powers—with this time the inclusion of France—and it was agreed that the Dardanelles should be closed to all foreign vessels, those of Russia not excepted, which abrogated the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi.

In 1841, an expedition was undertaken against the Khan of Khiva, which, although costly in men and materials, owing to the severity of the climate and to the vast tract of country to be crossed, was eventually successful. It put an end to the depredations committed by nomad tribes on Russian caravans and ultimately converted the khanate into a tributary state. The political and mercantile influence of Russia in the Far East was growing rapidly; in the course of the next few years, commercial intercourse was established with Bokhara; a market was opened on the Irtish and relations with China were so far assured

that, by 1854, a Russian school flourished in Pekin and a Russian colony on the Amur.

As we have seen, the Tsar was chary of foreign travel, and personal contact with contemporary monarchs formed no part of his political programme. But in 1844 he went to London, sacrificing his superior isolation to his desire for an *entente* with England, which should at once humiliate France and hasten the dissolution of the Ottoman empire. He was cordially received, although his reputation as an autocrat and a tyrant counteracted the admiration inspired by his magnificent appearance; but the English Government treated his propositions with reserve, and contented itself with vague and formal expressions of amity, which, however, Nicholas seems to have construed into definite assurances of support.

Two years later he visited Rome, where an interview with the venerable pontiff, Gregory XVI, resulted in more friendly relations with the Papal See and a less intolerant attitude towards Roman Catholics in Russia.

Meanwhile the feeling of unrest was growing on the continent. Thoughts of political emancipation were stirring in the mind of almost every nation, and such men as Kossuth and Mazzini were at hand to direct those aspirations into practical channels.

Agitations in Northern and Southern Italy foreshadowed the events of 1848, and in February 1846 the landowners of Austrian Poland attempted to establish their country's independence, assisted by the Russo-Polish refugees in Paris. The standard of rebellion was raised in Galicia; but the peasantry, instead of rallying in support of the national cause, revolted against their masters, and a fierce jacquerie ensued, which resulted in the massacre of thousands of the nobility. The free republican city of Cracow joined the insurrection, and thereupon was entered by the

troops of Russia, Austria and Prussia, in accordance with the terms of Münchengratz. The rebels were dispersed, the republic of Cracow was suppressed and the city was annexed by Austria, in spite of the protests of England and France at this direct contravention of the Congress of Vienna.

In 1848, the revolutionary storm which had been slowly gathering over Europe, burst in all its fury; beginning in France, it spread like wildfire through Germany, Austria and Italy, till it had affected practically every continental State in turn. Russia alone escaped, but the Tsar strengthened his army as a precautionary measure and suppressed incipient insurrection in Poland with an iron hand. Much as Nicholas rejoiced over the downfall of Louis Philippe, his principles anent legitimate hereditary authority were outraged by the establishment of a Republican Government in France and by the ultimate elevation of Napoleon III to the throne. He therefore held himself coldly aloof from the advances of the latter, whom he persisted in regarding as a *parvenu* and an adventurer.

On the other hand, as the champion of autocracy in Europe, Nicholas sent an army into Roumania to suppress the rising which had driven the Hospodar Bibesco from Bucharest, and he responded gladly to the appeals of the newly elected Emperor, Francis Joseph, for help against the Magyars, who, under the able leadership of Kossuth and Görgei, assisted by numerous Polish refugees under Dembinski, threatened the security of the Austrian throne and empire. Paskiévitch, at the head of 190,000 Russians, entered Hungary in July, defeated the insurgent forces in several encounters, occupied Transylvania and forced Görgei to surrender unconditionally in August. Hungary was then delivered into the hands of Francis Joseph, who sanctioned a series of merciless reprisals which

horrified all Europe, and effectually extinguished the national independence.

In 1849, Nicholas intervened to suppress rebellion in Bosnia and Bulgaria and to prevent the violation of Danish territory by the Prussian troops supporting the revolted people of Schleswig-Holstein. In 1850, he mediated at Warsaw between the sovereigns of Austria and Prussia, who had quarrelled over the question of German unity. So far he had fulfilled his self-appointed mission as the arbiter of Europe and the apostle of the Holy Alliance with conspicuous success ; but he had reached the summit of his prestige and power, and the descent had begun.

Turkey, whom Nicholas had long regarded as " a sick and dying man," was proving unexpectedly perverse and giving signs of a political independence intolerable in a nation whom treaty obligations had rendered almost a vassal state. Kossuth and many of the proscribed Hungarians and Poles had taken refuge at Constantinople, and the requests of Austria and Russia for their extradition met with a firm refusal. All Western Europe applauded this humane conduct on the part of the Sultan, and when the representatives of despotism attempted to enforce their demand, the appearance of British and French warships in the Dardanelles warned them to desist. The claim was waived, but the rebuff dealt a blow to the Tsar's pride, from which he was slow to recover.

In 1852, disputes arose between the monks of the Greek and Latin faiths as to the custodianship of the Holy Places at Jerusalem ; and Russia and France, as chief representatives of the two creeds concerned, warmly embraced the cause of their respective Churches. The Sultan, caught between two fires, tried to compromise, but he eventually gave a decision in favour of France, whereat Nicholas at once lodged a formal protest against this infringement of the Treaty of

Adrianople and of his rights of protection over Greek Christians of the Ottoman empire.

Like his obstinacy, the Tsar's political integrity was great. It is probable that he acted purely from a sense of duty towards the Church of which he was the secular head; but there is no doubt that, like all his race, he had long cast covetous eyes upon Constantinople. Relying on the support of England and on the signs of Turkish dissolution, he felt that the moment for furthering his ambitions had arrived. In February 1853, in a private interview with Sir Hamilton Seymour, the British ambassador at Petersburg, Nicholas, "speaking as a friend and gentleman," had expressed his belief that the time had come to divide the decaying Ottoman empire between England and Russia, to the exclusion of France. England might annex Egypt and Crete, while Russia would take Constantinople and retain her suzerainty over the independent principalities of Servia, Bulgaria and the Danube. "If," continued the Tsar, "England and myself can come to an understanding about this affair, the rest matter very little to me, and I shall care very little what the others (*i.e.* Austria and France) may think or do."

In the meantime, Prince Mentchikov had been despatched to Constantinople, ostensibly to settle the differences anent the Holy Places, but in reality to enforce the Russian protectorate over Orthodox believers, and to obtain a treaty securing this right in future, throughout all parts of the Turkish dominions. The latter stipulation, however, gave great offence to England and France, who were naturally averse to the vast increase of Russian influence that such an arrangement would entail. At the instigation of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the British ambassador, the Porte refused to accede to Mentchikov's ultimatum, as being "contrary to the fundamental principles of independence and sovereignty" of the Ottoman empire; and,

having failed in his mission, the Russian envoy quitted Constantinople.

The Tsar immediately ordered the occupation of the Danubian provinces; not, as he was careful to explain, as a declaration of war, but as a defensive measure and as a guarantee that the Treaty of Adrianople and the rights of Greek Christians would be respected. The Russian army under Gortchakov crossed the Pruth in June, while, to counteract this move, the British and French fleets entered Besika Bay in July.

Neither side desired war. Turkey was not ready; while Nicholas had counted on the neutrality, if not the co-operation, of Great Britain, and was disconcerted at her unexpected opposition. France may have had private slights to avenge, but England at all events laboured earnestly for peace.

It was agreed to refer the dispute to the arbitration of the Powers, and a conference was held at Vienna, where a compromise might have been arrived at had not the Porte, emboldened by western protection, proved unexpectedly aggressive. The Vienna Note, embodying the terms of settlement, was repudiated by Turkey, unless certain modifications and the evacuation of the Danubian provinces were included; and to these amendments Nicholas declined to consent. Turkey declared war in October, and defeated the Russians at Olnitsa, on the Danube, a few days later; but in November, the Russian admiral Nakhimov annihilated a Turkish squadron at Sinope, off the southern shores of the Black Sea, an action which was stigmatised as premature by both England and France and which undoubtedly hastened the general rupture.

In January 1854, the British and French fleets entered the Euxine and drove the Russians' ships into port. But even yet an agreement between the Powers might have been effected, had not Austria, at the

eleventh hour, further complicated matters by joining with Turkey to demand the instant evacuation of the Danubian Principalities. England's questionable conduct in publishing the Tsar's confidential conversation with Sir Hamilton Seymour, had inflamed continental opinion against Russia and had especially exasperated Austria, who naturally resented Nicholas' galling indifference to her views. She burned to avenge the insult, and, in spite of her many obligations to Russia, she determined, in the words of Schwarzenberg, the Austrian minister, "to astonish the world with her ingratitude" and to assert the full weight of the influence which Nicholas affected to despise. With so many conflicting interests at stake, a settlement was impossible. England and France declared war on behalf of Turkey, in March, while Austria and Prussia —though otherwise neutral—concluded an offensive and defensive alliance together, in case Russia invaded Austrian territory and crossed the Balkans.

Russia was now attacked by the united fleets on all her seas. Odessa on the Euxine, Cronstadt, the fortress of Bomarsund, and Sveaborg in the Baltic, alike suffered bombardment; the monastery of Solovetski in the White Sea was shelled and the arsenal of Petrapavlovski and several ports on the Sea of Okhotsk were destroyed. By land, the war in the Danubian provinces was pursued between the Russians and Turks, from the winter of 1853 to the summer of 1854, without decisive result on either side. Having failed to reduce Silistria, after a siege of some weeks, the Russians withdrew across the Pruth. In June, they finally evacuated the Principalities, which were then occupied by Austrian troops, according to agreement with the Powers.

The British and French disembarked at Varna, and, at a council of war, it was decided to attack Sebastopol, as the key of Russian influence in the East. Renewed

negotiations for peace had failed, and Russia having rejected the " Four Points " embodying the renunciation of her rights in the Danubian Principalities, the Black Sea and over the Orthodox Greeks of the Ottoman empire, the war was allowed to take its course. In September the allies landed in the Crimea.

The rout of the Russians under Mentchikov, at Alma, at once opened the way to Sebastopol, and for the moment all seemed lost. But a delay in the allied advance, gave the garrison under Admiral Kornilov and Todleben, the famous engineer, time to strengthen the fortifications so effectually, as to withstand all the arts of modern warfare for a whole year. The Russian army entrenched without the city hindered the attack and gave battle at Balaclava in October, at Inkerman in November and at Eupatoria in February 1855. Both sides suffered enormously, and in addition to the horrors of war, the inclement climate, the ravages of cholera and disease, mismanagement and inadequate supplies, destroyed the opposing forces by thousands a day. After Eupatoria, the incompetent Mentchikov was recalled, and replaced by Gortschakov ; but this was the Tsar's only concession to the popular outcry in Russia against the disasters and wanton waste of life in the East.

The national confidence in the infallibility of their Emperor was shaken, and the murmurs of discontent and adverse criticism could be no longer suppressed. The press censorship prevented the publication of seditious literature, but anonymous pamphlets in manuscript were disseminated everywhere and voiced the general indignation. " Russia, O Tsar," cried one of these circulars, " confided to thee the supreme power, and thou wert to her as a god upon earth. And what hast thou done ? Blinded by passion and ignorance thou hast sought nothing but power ; thou hast forgotten Russia. Thou hast consumed thy life in review-

ing troops, in altering uniforms, in signing the legislative projects of ignorant charlatans. Thou hast created a despicable race of press censors, that thou mightest sleep in peace and never know the wants, never hear the murmurs of thy people, never listen to the voice of truth. Advance, O Tsar! Appear at the bar of God and of history. Thou hast mercilessly trodden truth under thy feet, thou hast refused liberty at the same time that thou wast enslaved by thine own passions. By thy pride and obstinacy thou hast exhausted Russia; thou hast armed the world against her. Humiliate thyself before thy brothers! Bow thy haughty forehead in the dust! Implore pardon, ask counsel, throw thyself into the arms of thy people. There is no other way of salvation for thee."

But the "Iron Emperor" could not yield; concession and submission were alike impossible to his proud and obstinate nature. Though the execrations of his people pierced his heart, he gave no sign of his suffering, and steadfastly refused to accede to the popular clamour for peace.

His health gave way under the constant strain; he had wearied of life, and in the bitterness of his heart he declined to take care of himself, or to relax any of his public labours. He developed pneumonia as the result of a neglected chill, and on 23rd March 1855, after a few days' illness, the great, though misguided emperor died, declaring with his last breath that he had undertaken the war from purely disinterested motives on behalf of the Orthodox Church.

CHAPTER XI

ALEXANDER II

1855–1881

THE eldest son of Nicholas I, who now ascended the throne as Alexander II, was thirty-seven years of age, having been born in 1818. From early infancy he had been carefully prepared for his future responsibilities, and though not especially brilliant or strong-minded, he was high-principled, well-disposed and industrious. His teachers had all been men of mental and moral superiority; and his governor, the humanitarian poet, Zhukovski—himself a disciple of Pestalozzi—had taken care to foster his pupil's warm-hearted disposition and to imbue him with a taste for history, foreign languages and liberal ideas. The late Tsar's dread of western innovations had somewhat checked his son's mental development, by restricting his intercourse with other nations and with the political, religious and scientific investigations of the age; but much travel in Russia had given the Tsarevitch an intimate knowledge of every corner of his own dominions, while, towards the close of his father's life, he had been permitted a prominent share in the administration.

Like all the sons of Nicholas I, Alexander had been brought up on strictly military lines and had early acquired the habits of order and discipline which distinguished him in after-life. But, unlike the majority of his race, he took no interest in the soldiering to

which his father attached so much importance, and, although he fulfilled his duties as an officer in the Guards with exemplary fidelity, he was essentially a man of peace. In 1841, he had married Maria Alexandrovna of Hesse Darmstadt, by whom he had a numerous family, but the union was not particularly happy, and on the death of the Empress in 1880, after a long illness, the Tsar contracted a morganatic alliance with a Princess Dolgorouki, whom he had long loved and whose self-sacrificing devotion and sympathetic companionship did much to gladden the remaining months of his life.

Alexander had been a devoted son and his father's constant companion; but their characters and views were widely dissimilar, so that whereas Nicholas had ruled with a rod of iron, Alexander came to the throne determined to govern by kindness, and to endear autocracy to his people by its benevolence. The repressive measures of the late reign, therefore, gave place to a policy of concession and emancipation, the results of which were the birth and growth of Nihilism and that long series of dastardly attempts on the Emperor's life, which culminated in the tragedy of 1881.

Nicholas on his death-bed had warned his successor that he would inherit a heavy burden, and, indeed, the prospect was one before which a less optimistic nature would have quailed. The continuance of a disastrous war against the great Powers had embittered public opinion and drained the national resources to the dregs; trade was at a standstill, the treasury was empty and the privy purse was a million roubles in debt. Strong in the excellence of his own intentions, however, Alexander approached his formidable task with resolution, and the nation, encouraged by the confidence of their Tsar, felt that the day of better things had dawned.

Alexander's first anxiety was to bring the Crimean War to a conclusion, and, until he had accomplished this purpose, he refused to be crowned. Peace negotiations had been mooted towards the close of 1854, and a few days after the new Tsar's accession, a conference was opened at Vienna, between Prince Alexander Gortschakov, the Russian representative, and the plenipotentiaries of the allied Powers. Gortschakov, however, refused to consent to terms which involved the renunciation of Russian supremacy in the Black Sea and the Danubian provinces, so that in August the war was renewed, to drag its weary length for yet another eighteen months.

The end was a foregone conclusion ; in spite of the bravery of her soldiers, Russia was overpowered, the sooner, that a Sardinian contingent of 18,000 men joined the confederation against her, at the instigation of Cavour, who hoped thereby to obtain a footing for Italy among the Great Powers. Kertch, Taganrog and the Sea of Azov were in the enemies' hands ; the battle of Traktir on the Tchernaya was lost in August, and in September, after a heroic resistance of 150 days, Sebastopol was carried by assault, and the ruins of its fortifications were occupied by the allies.

Hostilities still continued, and in November, Kars was taken by the Russians ; but the nation was exhausted by the long struggle, and dissensions amongst the western Powers hastened the conclusion of peace, which was signed at Paris in March 1856. By this treaty Russia regained possession of the Crimea, but she was compelled to renounce her supremacy in the Danubian Principalities, and her protectorate over Orthodox Christians ; to restore Kars to Turkey and to cede a portion of Bessarabia to Roumania, soon (1859) to be created an independent State. Russia was further deprived of her domination of the Black Sea, which was declared to be neutral water for all

merchant vessels, but inaccessible to warships of whatever nationality, and neither Russia nor Turkey might erect a naval base upon its shores, or more than a limited number of lighthouses. Thus the work of past centuries, represented by the Treaties of Kainardji, of Bucharest and of Adrianople, were swept aside, and although diplomatic effort recovered these losses to Russia in the course of the next few years, for the time being her European prestige and her power in the Near East were destroyed.

The peace, ignominious as it was, was received with universal rejoicing in Russia, as was the imperial manifesto announcing the cessation of hostilities and foreshadowing radical reforms in every branch of the national life. "The war," said one of the leading official journals, "has opened our eyes to the dark sides of our political and social organisation, and it is our duty to profit by the lesson."

In September, the Tsar was crowned at Moscow; special embassies representing each of the European Powers were present at the ceremony, and the usual amnesty to political prisoners was proclaimed, which included the Dekabrists of 1825, and the Polish refugees.

Intent on winning the affections of his people and on solving the problem of domestic reform, Alexander surrounded himself with enlightened men such as Milyutin, Lanskoi and Golovnin, and, in the words of his coronation edict, set himself earnestly "to change, to pardon and restore." Many of the reactionary measures of the late Tsar were repealed; arrears of taxes were remitted and recruiting was abolished for the next four years; the hated military colonies of Araktchéev were relinquished; the power of the Secret Police was curtailed and the censorship of the press was removed. The universities were emancipated and women students were admitted for

the first time. Far from being prohibited, liberty of thought, western culture and western progress were encouraged, with the result that every man and every woman was free to air his or her opinion, and the growth of socialistic ideas and of subversive literature was enormous.

At first, however, these beneficent innovations were received with loyal enthusiasm throughout Russia; while a personal visit from the Tsar, soon after his accession, to Finland and the Baltic Provinces, strengthened the allegiance of the border States, which appreciated their sovereign's benevolent intentions and his evident desire to gratify the wishes of his subjects.

In Poland only, were these conciliatory efforts received with obstinate ill will; and at the instigation of the aged Prince Adam Czartoryski, all attempts at union with Russia were strenuously opposed. Important concessions were granted to the Poles, and many of their national institutions were revived, while, in April 1856, the Tsar went in person to Warsaw, where, in his address to the assembled States, he expressed his unalterable goodwill, his obliteration of the past and his intention to promote the happiness of Poland to the utmost of his power. He refused, however, to restore the Constitution of 1818, or to permit an amalgamation with Lithuania and Volhynia; and the declaration of his determination to pursue his father's policy in these respects was construed into a threat and resented accordingly.

The revolted tribes of the Caucasus had taken advantage of the Crimean War to renew their insurrection, and, under the able leadership of the famous Schamyl, they had inflicted several defeats upon the Russian troops sent to oppose them. At last, in 1858, Vedeni, the rebel fastness, was captured by Prince Bariatinski; while, in the following year, the chief himself was besieged in his fortress of Goubib and forced to

surrender. He was carried to Russia, where he was given a pension befitting his rank and where he lived in honourable captivity for many years. With his overthrow, the rebellion came to an end, and, in 1860, the Caucasian provinces were placed under the viceroyalty of the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas, who made every effort to civilise the tribesmen and to convert them into useful members of society. The Moslem Circassians, however, were proverbially idle and depraved ; preferring exile to a peaceful agricultural existence under the rule of the Russian unbelievers, they emigrated in vast numbers to Turkey, whence they were drafted into Bulgaria and other provinces, to become the scourge and terror of the unhappy peoples upon whom they were quartered, as much by their lawless ways and their habits of child and cattle-stealing, as by the brutal persecution they waged against their Christian hosts, with the sanction, if not the connivance of the Porte.

The year 1861 is for ever memorable in the annals of Russia for the emancipation of the serfs ; the greatest legislative measure of modern times, as it has been called, which was to open " a new and glorious epoch in the national history." The enslavement of her serfs had long been a blot on Russia's existence as a civilised Christian State, and from time to time her rulers—notably Peter I, Catherine II and Alexander I—had striven unavailingly to remedy the evil. Under the last-named monarch, the Crown peasants had received their freedom in all but name, while Nicholas I, " in spite of his hostile views on liberty . . . never ceased to cherish the idea of emancipating the serfs throughout his dominions." In 1847, he appointed a commission to consider the question, but, owing to the revolutionary outbreak of 1848 and to the subsequent war with Turkey, the matter remained in abeyance. Thus, in 1853, out of the sixty million

inhabitants of Russia, more than half that number were slaves, to be bought and sold like cattle, with the land to which they were attached. Three days in the week the serf was compelled to labour gratuitously for his master, in return for which service he was permitted on the remaining three days to wring what he could from the modicum of land he called his own, out of which he was expected to pay his taxes and to support his family.

Nicholas I, on his death-bed, bequeathed the task of remedying this monstrous evil to his son; and in March 1856, a few days after the Treaty of Paris had been signed, Alexander, in an address to the marshals of his nobility, boldly announced his purpose and invited the co-operation of the gentry in his undertaking. "The autocratic power," confessed the Tsar, "has created serfdom, and the autocratic power ought, therefore, to abolish it. . . . The existing manner of possessing serfs cannot remain unchanged. It is better to abolish serfdom from above than await the time when it will abolish itself from below."

With the growth of mental and moral enlightenment, it was recognised that sooner or later the abolition of serfdom had become inevitable. But, fearful for their own interests, the majority of the proprietors did not welcome the idea, and, while acknowledging its desirability, they preferred to leave its execution to future generations.

In 1857, the Tsar created a committee for the amelioration of the condition of the serfs, but little was done by this commission. When, towards the close of the same year, the Lithuanian nobles, for political reasons, voluntarily released their serfs, Alexander seized the opportunity to issue an edict commending the deed and urging other landed proprietors to follow suit. Thus directly appealed to, the gentry had no choice but to obey, and provincial

committees of landowners were formed throughout the empire to devise a plan of action. These provincial committees sat for eighteen months, but they accomplished nothing, owing to the conflicting interests and opinions of the members. In 1859, therefore, the Tsar nominated a central committee of twelve members under his own direction, to counteract the opposition of the conservatives and to hasten the execution of his purpose. Passive resistance was still the order of the day; and an Imperial Commission was then created, headed by the Grand Duke Constantine, and consisting of enlightened philanthropists such as Samarin and Prince Tcherkassi, all of whom laboured earnestly on behalf of peasant independence, and, by their own sacrifices to their serfs, set a noble example to their fellows.

Under the auspices of this commission, the measure was carried, and on 3rd March 1861 an Imperial ukase converted twenty-five millions of serfs into free proprietors. By this act, the agrarian peasant was freed from his servile obligations to his lord, and was confirmed in the possession of the enclosure which contained his hut and the piece of ground surrounding it. The rest of the land occupied by the village became common property, to be worked for the benefit of the community or "Mir." The landlord was to be indemnified for the loss of his property and serfs at so much per head, and the sum thus granted was to be advanced by the Government, to be repaid by the Mir within forty-six years, at an interest of 6 per cent. No peasant might sell his land, which belonged to his family, in trust for the community; it was apportioned—and periodically reapportioned—according to the working capacity of the household and its consequent ability to assist in earning the redemption money owed by the Mir to the State. Each village, under its "starost" or mayor, was respon-

sible for its own local self-government, and groups of villages were placed under the jurisdiction of the "volost" or municipality.

The question of the one and a half million domestic serfs was more easily adjusted. They were obliged to continue their service for two years, but were then to be free, though without any landed rights. The remaining eighteen million Crown serfs, already freed, but paying rent for their lands, were exempted from this latter obligation in 1866.

The Russian serfs "had now acquired rights and privileges enjoyed by no other peasantry in Europe." On the whole, their gratitude was heartfelt to the monarch who had effected their liberation, though in many places there was a feeling of disappointment at the new conditions, which not only regulated the disposal of the land, but obliged the peasants to purchase the soil which their families had tilled for generations and which they therefore regarded as their own by ancient right. The intrigues of the conservatives, moreover, although powerless to frustrate the measure at the time of its conception, managed, now that it was accomplished, to obtain the dismissal of Lanskoi, the Minister of the Interior, and of Nicholas Milyutin, his coadjutor, both of whom had been the life and soul of the Emancipation. Valuyov, who succeeded them, was less liberal-minded and less stringent in preventing corruption among the officials appointed to administer the new law. Several peasant riots broke out; while in the province of Kazan, 10,000 serfs revolted under a peasant named Anton Petrov, and were only dispersed by the death of 80 of their number and by the execution of their leader.

Exasperated by the moderate policy which aimed at steering a middle course between the extremes of liberalism and conservatism, historians have stigmatised Alexander II as vacillating and infirm of purpose;

and that he was often guilty of irresolution cannot be denied, witness his dismissal of Lanskoi and Milyutin, before they had time to complete the work which they had begun. None the less, the emancipation of the serfs was, in the words of Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace, "a beneficial and essential reform, owed above all things to the firm will of the Tsar," who, in spite of fierce opposition, had the courage and the pertinacity to execute the scheme which his ancestors had projected, but had failed to achieve.

Nor did the Emperor's zeal for the national welfare end there, for many much-needed reforms in the navy, the army and the judicial system were accomplished in the course of the next few years. The law was made equal for all and no longer modified for the nobility, while the penal code was improved, and public trial by jury was introduced, with right of appeal to the "Morovoi Sud" or assembly of justices, and thence finally to the Senate.

A demand for political emancipation arose, and the "Zemstvo" was created—a popular council representing the landowners, artisans and serfs, whose members were elected by the "volosts" and "mirs" of the various Russian provinces. It is known that Alexander was also about to revive the Sobor or national parliament, when death cut short his career and delayed the birth of a constitutional government.

The restless condition of Poland, already referred to, gave cause for grave anxiety, and was aggravated by the intrigues of refugees abroad and of the Czartoryskis and other influential nobles at home. Jealousy of Italian independence and of the Austrian concessions to Hungary, still further increased the popular discontent; while the emancipation of the serfs in Russia, involving, as it did, the extension of the movement to Poland as a Russian province, threatened the rights of the Polish landowners, as well as the activities of the

Polish Agricultural Society, which had been founded by Prince Andrew Zamojski for the agrarian development of the nation on patriotic lines.

In 1860, the anniversary of the rebellion of 1830 was made the occasion of a vast political demonstration which terminated in disorder and bloodshed ; and, in spite of numerous concessions on the part of the Russian Government, these hostile manifestations became increasingly frequent. Prince Gortschakov, the viceroy, died, worn out with his efforts to preserve the peace, and was followed in rapid succession by Count Lambert, Count Lüders, and finally by the Grand Duke Constantine, each of whom endeavoured to conciliate the people, but in vain. The clamour for a constitution, a national army, and union with Lithuania grew ; attempts were made on the lives of the viceroy and other prominent officials, and at length the Russian Government was driven to adopt a policy of vigorous repression. The Agricultural Society was suppressed, its leader was transported, martial law was declared, and in 1863 a general conscription of political suspects during the night of 14th January led to an immediate outbreak of revolution.

The Polish peasantry took no part or interest in the national cause, and the insurrection was the work of the nobles, citizens and clergy, under the direction of the " Rzad " or secret council. This council consisted of five members, who levied taxes, issued decrees and inaugurated a widespread system of assassination and incendiarism ; their orders were scrupulously obeyed and their identity was never betrayed. The insurgents took refuge in the forests, but they had no regular army, no artillery, and in many cases no arms, so that the rebellion developed into a guerilla war against all Russians and their partisans.

There were no regular battles, but several skirmishes took place, of which Vengrov and Opatovo were the

most important. Little mercy was shown by either side; the prisoners were slaughtered, and the leaders of the revolt, such as the young and gallant Sierakowski, were hanged whenever captured. The country was overrun by Russian soldiers, and General Mouraviev was appointed governor of the western provinces, while Count Berg succeeded the Grand Duke Constantine as viceroy of Poland. Each inaugurated a system of ruthless repression, so that, by 1864, the five heads of the Rzad had been captured and executed, and the rebellion was stamped out. Once more all traces of Poland's national existence were erased; recent concessions were withdrawn and the native language and native institutions were suppressed; but the peasantry, who throughout the insurrection had remained loyal to the Russian Government, were rewarded with their freedom and with absolute possession of the land they occupied.

Europe intervened and attempted to mediate on behalf of the defeated Poles; but such offers were curtly rejected by Russia, who not unnaturally resented such uncalled-for interference, and felt herself fully competent to cope unaided with her own domestic disorders.

The year 1866 marked the first of the many attempts upon the life of Alexander II, namely that of the student Karakosov, who fired at the Emperor in the garden of the summer palace at Petersburg, and would have killed him, had not the pistol been knocked up at the critical moment by a peasant named Komisarov. The latter was pensioned and Karakosov was shot; but the trial of the would-be assassin revealed the existence of a secret society which had taken deep root in Russia and to whose agency the numerous and unexplained fires of 1862 may be attributed.

Under Nicholas I the mental activities of the nation had been too long repressed; and the era of Alexander

II, with its increased facilities for education and foreign travel, had inflamed the minds of the young men and women of the cultivated classes and had imbued them with the socialistic doctrines of Robert Owen, of Karl Marx and of other western fanatics. The relatively mild sentiments enunciated by the exiled Herzen in his radical newspaper, *The Bell*, gave place to the advanced theories of Bakunin, who had escaped from Siberia and had joined Herzen in London; while Tchaikovski, another exile, became the head of a secret political debating society, which had branches all over Russia and spread sedition throughout the land. Insensibly the scientific researches of the schools developed into the study of sociology, with the result that, although many of the nobility joined the new movement, it was mainly propagated by the universities, whose students, with the impatience and inexperience of youth, burned to discard the fetters of the past and to create new worlds in a moment of time. Autocracy and a monarchical government were unanimously condemned by these young enthusiasts, but thereafter their views diverged: one section, the Zapadniki or Westerns, wished to raise Russia to the level of the rest of Europe; while another group, the Slavophiles, regarded the West as effete, and aimed at reform on national lines. The disciples of this ultra-liberal gospel became known as Nihilists, from a word coined, it is believed, by Turganiev and which was replaced later by the more modern and comprehensive term of Anarchists. Their activities increased, till the Government, alarmed at their excesses, adopted a plan of stern repression and recreated the Secret Police, by whom the Nihilist leaders were apprehended and imprisoned or exiled to Siberia, with hundreds of their followers. The movement spread rapidly, however, and with the avowed object of annihilating all forms of authority, all religious and moral

restraints, it laid the foundations of a brutal terrorism, which, from that day to this, has ruined the peace and prosperity of the country it professed to save.

Though thus unfortunate in his internal administration, the foreign policy of Alexander II was more successful and greatly increased his power and prestige. The Crimean War had proved indirectly beneficial to Russia in the Far East, by stimulating her energies to strengthen her possessions along the trade route to India and China, with the object of keeping a check on the rival ambitions of Great Britain. Commercial treaties opened many of the ports of those empires to Russian vessels, while the district of Amur had already been acquired by the convention of Aigoun in 1858, and the port of Vladisvostock was in course of completion.

In 1859, a raid on Russian caravans by the marauding tribes of Turkestan, afforded an excuse for a punitive expedition against the hostile khanates of Khokand, Tashkend, Samarkand and Bokhara, all of whom were gradually subdued by 1868. In spite of British remonstrances, the first three were formally annexed under the rule of the Russian governor-general of Turkestan, and Bokhara was reduced to the position of a vassal state; while a similar fate befell Khiva, whose khan had revolted from the supremacy of the "infidel" in 1871, to be finally subjugated in 1875.

The chief feature in Alexander's western policy was the alliance with Germany, the Tsar's affection for his uncle the Emperor William and his admiration for the diplomatic genius of Prince Bismarck, having cemented the already close connection between the courts of Petersburg and Berlin. The Iron Chancellor's influence was supreme in both capitals; and Russia, by lending herself readily to the furtherance of his schemes of aggression against Austria and France, reaped the

reward of her docility in 1871, when, with German aid, she obtained a revision of the Treaty of Paris and the restoration of her rights in the Black Sea.

Monarchs were as pawns in the hands of the great Prussian statesman; and under his auspices the League of the three Emperors of Russia, Austria and Germany was concluded at Berlin in the summer of 1872, which assured the predominance of the last-named Power in the politics of Europe, and completed the isolation of France.

In 1875, the insurrection of Bosnia and Herzegovina against the religious persecutions of the Turks, threatened once more to plunge Europe into war. The wholesale massacres and nameless atrocities committed by the Bashi-bazouks upon the inhabitants of the insurgent provinces, roused a feeling of horror throughout the whole civilised world. Austria and Russia were the first to intervene, as the two Powers most intimately concerned in the fate of the Slavonic race and of the Orthodox Church.

The famous Note drawn up by Count Andrassy, the Austrian minister, demanding religious toleration and certain political reforms for the Christian population of the Turkish dominions, was signed by representatives of all the Western Powers, and was forwarded to the Porte in January 1876. But though the Sultan promised to grant the required concessions, it soon became evident that he had no intention of keeping his word, and that foreign interference, far from producing peace, had still further inflamed the fury of the Moslems against the giaours. The massacres continued, the Prussian and French consuls at Salonika were murdered by a Turkish mob; and Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria having joined the insurrection, the whole Balkan Peninsula was then in arms.

The three Emperors of Austria, Russia and Germany then issued the Berlin memorandum, requesting the

co-operation of the Powers to enforce the terms of the Andrassy Note and to obtain satisfaction for the murder of the consuls. France and Italy telegraphed their consent; but England, at the instigation of Disraeli, refused to accede, and instead, proposed a conference at Constantinople to settle the differences between the East and West.

In the interval (July), the Emperors of Austria and Russia met at Reichstadt, in Bohemia, and concluded a secret compact, by which it was agreed that in the event of war, Austria was to take no part in the conflict, and to receive Herzegovina and Bosnia as the price of her neutrality, while Russia was to recover the portion of Bessarabia which she had lost in 1856.

The representatives of the Powers assembled at Constantinople in December; but the Porte, relying on Disraeli's desire to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman empire at all costs, declined to assent to their demands for the religious and political independence of the Danubian Principalities. In April 1877, therefore, Russia declared war.

Alexander was ardently anxious for peace, and to the last hoped that Turkey would yield to diplomatic pressure; but religious enthusiasm in Russia clamoured for energetic interference on behalf of the Balkan States, and he himself felt it his duty, as head of the Greek Church, to protect his fellow-believers against the violence of the infidel. His object was "the maintenance of peace and the amelioration of the condition of the Christians," and there was on this occasion no ground for England's deep-rooted distrust of Russia's motives. As far back as November 1876, the Tsar, in an interview with the British envoy, had clearly stated his conviction "that if Europe was willing to receive these repeated rebuffs from the Porte, he could no longer consider it as consistent with the honour, the dignity, or the interests of Russia.

He was anxious not to separate from the European concert, but the present state of things was intolerable and could no longer be allowed to continue. Unless Europe was prepared to act with firmness and energy, he should be obliged to act alone. . . . He regretted to see that there still existed in England an inveterate suspicion of Russian policy and a continual fear of Russian aggression and conquest. . . . He desired no conquest, he aimed at no aggrandisement . . . and he pledged his most sacred word of honour, in the most earnest and solemn manner, that he had no intention of acquiring Constantinople. If necessity obliged him to occupy Bulgaria, it would only be provisionally and until the safety of the Christian population was secured."

In readiness for the expected war, the Russian armies were massed at Kishenev, under the supreme command of the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas. Towards the end of June, they crossed the Danube at Sistova, having obtained a free passage through Roumania by the terms of a previous treaty. Their objective was the important Pass of Shipka in the Balkans, and an advance guard under General Gourko seized the Pass in July, crossed the Balkans, and entered the valley of the Tundja on the other side, thus opening up the road to Constantinople. The main body of the Russian troops, however, had been concentrated before Plevna, in Bulgaria; and Gourko, unable to maintain his position without reinforcements, was forced to retrace his steps to Shipka, which he fortified and defended for several weeks against the attacks of a far superior Turkish force under Suleiman Pasha.

Meanwhile the rest of the Russian army was encamped before the town and heights of Plevna, which had been occupied by Osman Pasha, and strongly fortified by an Italian engineer in the Turkish employ. The Russians made three desperate assaults upon this

stronghold between 19th July and 20th September, but each time were repulsed with heavy loss, and it soon became evident that, in spite of their bravery, the assailants were out-generalled at every point. To satisfy the popular outcry at these disasters, large reinforcements were called up, which included an army corps of Roumanians; and Todleben, the hero of Sebastopol, was summoned to the front and placed in command of the Russian forces. He at once converted the attack into a regular blockade, and, having cut off the Turkish communications and completely surrounded the town, he proceeded to starve Plevna into submission. His plan succeeded, for in December, after a defence of over four months, Osman Pasha was forced to surrender unconditionally, having exhausted his supplies and risked all in a brilliant, but unsuccessful sortie, which cost the lives of thousands of his men.

Bulgaria was then cleared of the Turks, though not before more than half the native population had been wantonly slaughtered by the Bashi-bazouks. The Russian army, carrying all before it, swept across the Balkans, defeated the Ottoman troops at Shipka, captured Philippopolis, entered Adrianople, and reached Rodosto on the Sea of Marmora by the end of January 1878. In Asia Minor, Count Loris Melikov had been equally successful; Kars, Ardahan and Erzeroum had fallen before him, and the security of the Ottoman empire was thus threatened on all sides.

The Sultan, having failed to obtain the mediation of the Powers, appealed to the Queen of England for her personal intervention on his behalf; but in response to a telegram from London, the Tsar, although anxious for peace, declined to accept outside interposition, or to negotiate, except directly with the Porte. In February, the Grand Duke Nicholas entered San Stefano, and the Sultan, finding the enemy

at the very gates of Constantinople, was forced to sue for peace on any terms and at any price.

By the Treaty of San Stefano, Russia retained Batoum and Ardahan, while she regained possession of Kars and of the territory at the mouth of the Danube which she had lost by the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Roumania received the Dobrudja in exchange. The Porte was also forced to pay an indemnity, to acknowledge the independence of Serbia, Montenegro and Roumania, with certain additions of territory to the two former States ; to grant autonomy to Bulgaria and to permit the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria.

This dismemberment of the Ottoman empire, involving as it did an extension of the Russian borders, was opposed to the policy of Great Britain in the East, and therefore was denounced by Lord Beaconsfield and by other English Turcophiles as incompatible with the peace and interests of Europe. A British fleet entered the Dardanelles, the reserves were mobilised and war with Russia was imminent for several weeks. But it was ultimately averted by the diplomatic exertions of Prince Bismarck, who, in the unaccustomed rôle of " honest broker," proposed a conference at Berlin, to settle the differences between the two Powers by international arbitration.

Alexander, who was sincerely anxious for peace, agreed to the suggestion, and the Treaty of Berlin was concluded in July. By this the pact of San Stefano was somewhat modified ; the territory south of the Balkans, from the Rhodope Mountains to the valley of the Maritza, was restored to Turkey under the name of Eastern Roumelia, and the Porte also regained possession of the port of Bourgas on the Black Sea and of certain districts in Asia Minor. The other clauses of the San Stefano convention remained substantially the same however, for Lord Beaconsfield

was only concerned to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman empire and to frustrate the ambitions of Russia by restoring Turkish dominion in the Balkan States. His efforts have been contradicted by after events. Greece, Serbia, Roumania, Bulgaria and Montenegro have each in turn developed into independent kingdoms, and, with the annexation of Eastern Roumelia to Bulgaria in 1885, Turkish supremacy in the Balkan Peninsula ceased to exist.

Alexander was present with his army at the front throughout the greater part of the Turkish campaign; but the anxieties and discomforts of the war had seriously impaired his health, never very robust, and much weakened by the constant attacks of asthma to which he was subject. An eye-witness of the meeting between the Emperors of Germany and Russia at Alexandrovo, in 1879, describes the latter as "much aged; his hair has become grey and in his fine face there is that painful expression of melancholy which abiding anxiety gives. The large, dark, expressive eyes have a fixed look, full of sorrow; the figure is, however, still fairly erect. The Emperor William looked almost the younger of the two."

As in the cases of his two predecessors, life had disillusioned Alexander II of all his hopes. He lived to see his devotion to the German alliance repaid by Bismarck with ingratitude and ill will; to know his domestic reforms decried as half-hearted; his efforts for the public weal misunderstood; the rigid personal economy which raised Russia from bankruptcy in 1855 to solvency in 1871 branded as niggardly; and he himself, as the representative of autocracy, marked out as the special object of Nihilist hatred. His home life was equally unfortunate. His eldest son Nicholas, a youth of unusual promise, died in 1865; while, as with his first wife, his relations with Alexander, his second son and heir, were far from

cordial, owing to the political differences between them.

General disaffection had been aroused by the protection accorded to the Jews, as well as by the decree of 1874, which instituted compulsory military service for a term of six years throughout the land, save for certain educational exceptions. The Memnonites or Russian Quakers, whom a similar edict had driven from Germany in 1818, were especially aggrieved, and many of them emigrated to America, thus depriving Russia of the most industrious and thrifty members of her agricultural population.

Renewed trouble in the East led to the defeat of the Russian troops in 1879, and, although the Turcomans were ultimately subdued by the capture of Goek Tepe in 1881, the affair increased the gloom of the nation, already resentful of the administration which had permitted the Treaty of Berlin.

Amid so much political discontent, sedition throve, and several prominent officials were murdered by the Terrorist agents. The attacks on the Tsar became more and more frequent, that of the Pole Berezovski, in 1867, being followed by three attempts in 1879 and by numerous assaults thereafter. Entreaties arose on every side urging Alexander to satisfy the popular demands at all costs, or to abdicate in time to save his life. But the Emperor, with a lofty courage worthy of the highest admiration, remained at his post, to die a martyr's death in the execution of his duty. Realising, however, that the efforts of the Secret Police had aggravated rather than quelled the revolutionary agitation, he determined to try the effects of more conciliatory methods, and in 1880 he resigned much of the executive power into the hands of Count Loris Melikov, an Armenian, whose liberal ideas, combined with his military successes in the Turkish war, had gained him universal popularity. Melikov released

many of the political prisoners, reopened the universities, abolished the salt tax, and, in 1881, proposed the creation of a national parliament, which should give the people a voice in the administration, without detracting from the autocratic power. This measure received the Imperial sanction, and was about to be published when the murder of the Tsar put an end to the scheme.

On Sunday, 13th March 1881, Alexander II attended a military parade, and was returning to the palace along the side of the Catherine Canal in Petersburg. A young woman in the street was seen to wave her handkerchief as a signal to her accomplices, and immediately a hand-grenade was flung beneath the Imperial carriage. The woman was Sophia Perovskaia, the daughter of a former governor of Petersburg, who, in spite of her gentle birth, had joined the Nihilists. By her courage and daring she had attained to great prominence among her fellows and had been concerned in more than one of the previous attempts to assassinate the Tsar.

The explosion in this case had torn off the back of the carriage, thrown down two horses of the Cossack escort and wounded one of the riders and a passer-by. Otherwise the damage was slight, and it seemed as if once more Providence had endowed the Tsar with a charmed life. In spite of the remonstrances of his attendants, Alexander alighted to inquire after the injured, and at that moment a young man named Zhelnikov flung another bomb, which exploded at the Emperor's feet, at the same time killing the assassin and several of the bystanders. The Tsar was blown to bits; one of his surgeons, who had witnessed the worst horrors of the Crimean and Turkish wars, afterwards declared that he had never before seen such awful wounds. The Emperor's clothes were in ribbons, a portion of his face had been blown away, the right

hand was lacerated, the abdomen severely gashed and both legs were almost severed from the trunk. He was, however, still alive, the intense cold having, it is supposed, somewhat checked the flow of blood. When his mangled body was lifted into a passing sleigh, he was heard to murmur, " Quicker—home to the Palace —die there." Arrived at the Palace, he was placed upon a couch in his study, where his medical attendants and the Imperial family were at once at hand ; but it was evident that life was almost extinct, and at 3.30 p.m., barely an hour and a half after the explosion, Alexander II was dead.

The deliberate and atrocious crime which had thus destroyed " the most beneficent prince that ever filled the throne of Russia," sent a thrill of horror throughout Europe, while in Russia the grief was universal and sincere. The soldiers and peasantry, by whom Alexander had been deservedly beloved, were especially moved ; and for some time after the murder, men and women were seen " searching for relics, or rubbing their handkerchiefs in the blood-stained snow ; some falling on their knees at the scene of the occurrence, weeping and crying and crossing themselves." The six perpetrators of the outrage were apprehended and sentenced to death ; one of them, a Jewess named Jessa Helfman, was reprieved and banished to the Siberian mines, while another blew out his brains at the moment of his arrest. But the other four were hanged, Sophia Perovskaia maintaining her unflinching fortitude to the end.

The reign of Alexander II was one of great intellectual brilliance, and many of the literary and scientific geniuses of the period have attained a world-wide reputation. In art, the musical composers Tchaikovski and Rubinstein flourished, as well as the painters Ivanov, Aivazovski, Tropinine, Makhovski and Verestchagin, and the sculptors Antakolski, Kamenski

and Pimenef. The great scientists included Brandt; Mendeleev, the chemist, whose "Principles" have been translated into English; Mechnikov, the microbiologist; Pirozov, the famous surgeon and anatomist; the mathematicians Sonia Kovalevskaia, Ostrogradski, Lobachevski and Tchebychev; and the scientific explorers Baer, Sossnovski, with many others.

Among the chief poets were Nekrasov, Shevchenko, Polonski, Surikov, Spiridon Drozhznin, Apukhin and Maikov. Novelists of the realistic school included Tchekhov, Maxim Gorki, Garshin, Gleb Uspenski, Pisarev, and Saltikov, the satirist, who wrote under the pseudonym of Stchedrin. Other prominent authors and savants were the Aksakov father and son; Katkov and Koshelev, the famous journalists; Annenkov and Druzhinin, the critics; and the historians Bestuzhev-Riumin, Roshkov, Golubinski, Miliukov and Kliuchevski.

CHAPTER XII

ALEXANDER III

1881–1894

ALEXANDER III, the new Tsar, was a man of sterling character, but his naturally amiable, upright disposition was marred by the obstinate narrow-mindedness of Nicholas I, and he had likewise inherited that monarch's autocratic temper and dislike of liberalism with tenfold intensity. He is described as "a man of strong if slow mental force, stolid, peremptory, reactionary; the possessor of a dull but firm resolution." His great strength and his massive build made him awkward in his movements; and he was no less awkward in his manner, thereby provoking many enemies who failed to discern the warm heart and the divers virtues hidden beneath a somewhat uncouth exterior.

Alexander was born in 1845, but he had not become the heir-apparent till the death of his elder brother Nicholas in 1865, so that his early education had been much neglected and mainly confined to the military training which was then considered all-sufficient tuition for a Russian Grand Duke. As soon as he became Tsarevitch, he conscientiously endeavoured to make up for these deficiencies and to fit himself in some measure for his future responsibilities; but his progress in his studies was impeded by his own limited mentality, as well as by his disinclination for all intellectual pursuits, and he never acquired the royal faculty for languages which his father had possessed

in such marked degree. One of his tutors was Pobiedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, who was destined later to exercise a baleful ascendency over the Empire and its Tsar. Pobiedonostsev failed to imbue his Imperial pupil with a love of letters, but he hardened the reactionary tendencies of the prince's disposition and sowed the seeds of the Russophile fanaticism which was to bear such bitter fruit in after years.

In 1866, the Tsarevitch married his deceased brother's betrothed, the Princess Dagmar of Denmark, who took the name of Marie Feodorovna on her admission into the Greek Church. Three sons and two daughters were born of this union, which seems to have been exceptionally happy, so that the home life of the Imperial family set an example of purity and mutual understanding which lasted to the end.

The Tsarevitch's reactionary, anti-German opinions clashed in every way with his father's foreign and domestic policy and he was allowed but little part in the administration of the empire. He served, however, with distinction throughout the Turkish war and did his best to remedy the military and naval abuses which came under his notice as commander-in-chief of the army in Eastern Bulgaria. But as two of his uncles and several of the highest officials in the land were involved in the corrupt practices which he endeavoured to expose, his reforms were not encouraged; thenceforward he withdrew as much as possible from public life and confined himself entirely to his military duties.

As Alexander III, his reactionary tendencies were at once apparent. In the manifesto published immediately after his accession, he announced his intention of walking in nis father's footsteps, but without permitting any infringement of the autocratic power which he

considered himself commissioned from God, "to support and preserve for the people's good from all impairment and injury." "Consecrating ourselves to our high service," continued the same edict, "we call upon our loyal subjects to serve us and the State in truth and justice, to the rooting out of the horrible seditions that dishonour the land of Russia, the strengthening of faith and morality, the good education of the young, the extermination of injustice and plunder, and the introduction of order and justice in the operation of those institutions presented to Russia by her benefactor, our beloved father."

The Emperor attributed the many disorders of the empire to the unwise concessions of the late administration and to the excessive liberties conferred upon a nation as yet unfit for political emancipation. He therefore cancelled the Constitution projected by the late Tsar and limited the functions of the Zemstvo and of other local administrative assemblies by the creation of the "Zemski Natchalniki," a new class of officials drawn exclusively from among the landed proprietors, who were invested with almost unlimited powers over the peasant communes, for whose loyalty and obedience they were responsible to the Government.

Count Loris Melikov, seeing his reforms thus set aside, resigned his office, and was succeeded as Minister of the Interior by General Ignatiev, an ardent reactionary, who lost no time in endeavouring to "extirpate the spirit of rebellion . . . and to establish a system for securing the participation of the local authorities in the execution of the Emperor's plans." In this he was actively assisted by Pobiedonostsev, who already was supreme in the Imperial Council. Between them the old evils of the early nineteenth century were revived; the restrictions on education and the press were renewed, the powers of the Mirovoi Sud were curtailed and much of the beneficent legislation of

the last reign was replaced by " temporary measures," designed to coerce the nation into the civil and religious submission imposed upon it by the new autocracy.

Amid all these hardships even Ignatiev seems to have felt the need of some concessions, if he would not wholly alienate the people from their Tsar ; and genuine efforts were made to ameliorate the material condition of the agricultural poor, by the reduction of their taxes and by the creation of peasant banks, to assist them to pay off the debt to the State incurred by the Emancipation of 1866. But these indulgences, mild as they were, alarmed the more retrogressive of Ignatiev's colleagues. In 1882 he was dismissed, and was succeeded by Count Dmitri Tolstoi, under whose direction all forms of independent thought were ruthlessly suppressed.

The reign of Alexander III has been stigmatised as a reign of terror ; that his rule was harsh and tyrannical cannot be denied, but it must be remembered that in this case the terror weighed more heavily upon the monarch than upon the nation, and that many of his oppressions were prompted partly by the instinct of self-defence, partly by a genuine desire to rescue Russia from the revolutionary agitations to which she had become a prey. Alexander had given ample proofs of courage upon the field of battle ; but the many Nihilist attempts upon the lives of the Imperial family, which culminated in the horror of his father's assassination, had shattered his nerve and produced a sort of chronic mental strain. The Emperor, to use the simile of M. Rambaud, mounted the throne as a soldier mounts the shell-torn walls of a beleaguered city. Though he remained at his post, " ready to fulfil his duty at any cost," the constant anxiety told upon his constitution and undoubtedly hastened his end.

On his accession, the Nihilists found means to introduce an ultimatum into the Emperor's hands,

offering him peace on condition of certain drastic reforms, or a sword, should he fail to accede to their demands. Alexander's courage and obstinacy were proof against such threats, which only served to strengthen his determination to stamp out sedition with an iron heel. But thenceforward it was war to the death between the Government and the Terrorists, and the incident marked the beginning of the long struggle between the two forces, which has recently terminated in the triumph of anarchy.

Inflamed by the writings of the exiled "Stepniak" (Sergius Kravchinski) and of other revolutionary agents, the organisation and activities of the Nihilists increased; in spite of the efforts of the Secret Police, many high officials were assassinated and numerous attempts were made upon the life of the Tsar. The most dastardly of these attacks was the wrecking of the Imperial train at Borki, in 1888, where, in spite of elaborate precautions to ensure their safety, the Emperor and his family narrowly escaped death and fifty-eight of his suite were killed or injured. Thereafter Alexander withdrew more and more from public life, to become practically a prisoner in his own palaces, which were strongly fortified, surrounded by a wall of soldiers and subjected inside and out to the close surveillance of innumerable Government spies, under the direction of Count Tcherevin, the Chief of Police.

Behind this veil of obscurity the Tsar retained a firm hold on public affairs, and, as supreme head of the Church and State, he exercised constant personal control over all branches of the administration. He had early been imbued by Pobiedonostsev with the Slavophile doctrine that in Nationality, Eastern Orthodoxy and Autocracy lay the only hope of Russia's peace and prosperity; and throughout his life he clung to this belief as his political ideal. He aimed at the unification of the empire, and to this end, he strove to

replace the various religious and civil traditions of the scattered provinces in his vast dominions, with the faith, language and institutions of Russia. "The historic rights of provinces must yield to the necessities of the Russian State," was the answer returned to a petition from the Courlanders, humbly praying for the restoration of their ancient privileges. The Russification of the Baltic provinces continued therefore, and involved the suppression of all non-Russian elements in the Church, the State and the schools, as well as the expulsion of all foreigners, particularly those of German extraction and of the Lutheran faith.

The Caucasian provinces were deprived of their autonomous Government, while in Finland—the most loyal and prosperous of the dependencies—much rebellious feeling was aroused by frequent infringements of the Assurance Act and by arbitrary endeavours to remodel the postal and fiscal systems of the nation upon Russian lines. In Poland it was the same. The decree of 1863, which forbade the transfer of landed property to persons of Polish birth, was revived, thereby reducing many families to destitution, and, in 1885, giving rise to a futile insurrection, which, however, was speedily suppressed.

As with civil, so with religious matters, and a fierce persecution of all forms of dissent was commenced, on the representations of Pobiedonostsev, who still retained his ascendency over the Imperial mind, and his post as lay head of the Holy Synod.

The Jews, whose usurious and corrupt practices had long exasperated the people and who rightly or wrongly were suspected of complicity in most of the Nihilist plots, were treated with special severity; but the Tsar undoubtedly possessed the sympathy of the majority of his subjects in his endeavours to extirpate the hated race. Within a few weeks of his accession, anti-Semitic riots broke out all over Russia,

which culminated in wholesale massacres of the unhappy Israelites and roused a storm of indignation throughout Europe. The Government did not actually countenance these atrocities, but it ignored them, and in 1882, it issued the famous "May Laws," or series of "temporary provisions," which excluded all foreign Hebrews from the country, and forbade those of Russian birth to dwell outside the "Pale of Settlement," or fifteen provinces in the west and south-west, which had been assigned them for their residence. Subsequent edicts closed many of the professions to Jewish candidates, limited the number of Jewish students in the schools and prohibited the employment of Christian servants by Jewish masters, without a special licence. Thus deprived of all means of advancement, as many Jews as could, to the number of 225,000 families, fled the country; but their less fortunate brethren were forced to abandon their business and property, and were hunted like cattle, back into the Pale. There they lived, "pent up within narrow bounds, and even within those bounds, forced to reside chiefly in towns that reeked and overflowed with every form of poverty and wretchedness; forbidden all free movements; hedged in every enterprise by restrictive laws; forbidden tenure of land, or all concern in land; their means of livelihood cramped; the higher education denied them"; herded together in want and misery, till starvation and disease put an end to their sufferings.

Almost equally unfortunate were the Lutheran inhabitants of the Baltic provinces. Their creed had always been obnoxious to the Tsar, and, ever since the year 1878, the Orthodox clergy had preached a bitter crusade against the Stundists of southern Russia, who were a branch of the Lutheran Church. This sect, which somewhat corresponded to the Methodists of our own land, owed its origin in Russia to the

German settlers of the eighteenth century and derived its name from the Teutonic word "Stunde," an hour, probably because its services lasted for about that length of time. Stundism, which had been introduced into Russia about the year 1858, by a peasant of Kherson, named Onishenko, did much by its lofty morality to improve the social, religious and intellectual life of the degraded serfs. By 1880, as many as 300,000 peasants had embraced the new faith, till the Greek Church, unable to make headway against the heresy, sought the assistance of the State, which sanctioned a relentless persecution of this sober, God-fearing people, in the year 1883.

The same year witnessed the coronation of the Tsar and the conclusion of the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria and Italy, which was to have so prolonged and far-reaching an effect upon the politics of Europe. M. de Giers had succeeded Prince Gortschakov in charge of foreign affairs, but Alexander was always his own chief minister and the real head of Russian diplomacy. His foreign policy was essentially pacific. In spite of his well-known Teutophobia and his resentment of Bismarck's double-dealing in the matters of the Triple Alliance and the anti-Russian convention with Austria in 1879, the Tsar avoided rupture with Germany, and, in 1884, renewed the League of the three Emperors at Skiernevice.

Events in the Balkan Peninsula, however, complicated the relations of the three empires. Austria and Germany were suspected of secretly encouraging the Bulgarian intrigues against Russia, which feeling was fanned to flame by Katkov in his *Moscow Gazette*, and was eagerly embraced by the people, to whom the Teutonic alliance had long been abhorrent. On the expiration of the Treaty of Skiernevice in 1887, therefore, the compact was not renewed, though Alexander so far succumbed to Bismarck's persuasions,

as to sign a Russo-German alliance of mutual defence and amity in the same year. But this latter arrangement expired in 1890, and also was allowed to lapse. Alexander had grown mistrustful of Bismarck's designs, and the rabid anti-German campaign, started by M. Katkov in 1886, had paved the way to a series of commercial treaties, to the exchange of visits between the French and Russian fleets, to the floating of a great Russian loan on the Parisian market and to other diplomatic civilities which marked the existence of a secret Franco-Russian *entente*, and the birth of the Dual Alliance which was to counteract the Triple Convention of the other Powers.

In the Far East, the extensions of Russian territory much exceeded those of other nations and brought the boundaries of the Muscovite empire to within 150 miles of the Indian frontier. Astrabad was annexed in 1881, and Merv in 1884, four khans of the latter district having voluntarily placed themselves under Russian protection. In the following year, British hostility was aroused by the defeat of an Afghan force at Kushk, by the Russian general Komarov, and by the consequent occupation of Penj-deh. England prepared for war, but was eventually pacified by the conciliatory concessions of the Tsar, and, in 1887, the respective limits of the Russian and Afghan borders were finally fixed by arbitration.

In 1891, a further advance eastwards placed the region of the Pamirs under the rule of Russia, so that her territories were then only separated from China by the natural boundaries of the Kizil Yart and from India by Karakorum and the Hindu Kush.

In 1886, the Tsar, having strengthened and increased his Black Sea fleet, boldly announced his intention to disregard the clause in the Treaty of Berlin which constituted Batoum a permanently free port. In spite of British remonstrances, he converted it into a fortified

naval station and Russia's chief war-harbour on the eastern shores of the Euxine.

Alexander had consolidated his position in the Near and the Far East, but closer home his influence was on the wane and the Russian hegemony of the Balkan provinces was much impaired. Bosnia and Herzegovina were under Austrian protection, while Serbia and Roumania were independent kingdoms whose monarchs made no secret of their Hapsburg predilections. Montenegro remained firmly attached to the Northern empire; but Bulgaria, although a Russian creation, ruled over by a Russian nominee, had lately shown signs of growing insubordination.

By the unanimous vote of the Grand Sobranie or national assembly, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the Tsar's first cousin, had ascended the throne of Bulgaria in 1879; but his position soon became untenable owing to the arbitrary interference of the Russian Government and to the hostile intrigues of the four Russian ministers, Jonin, Kaulbars, Sobolev and Khilkov, who had been foisted upon him from Petersburg and who aimed at converting Bulgaria into a dependency of the Muscovite empire.

In 1883, having failed to obtain the recall of these obstructionists, Prince Alexander effected a *coup d'état*, by which he restored the national constitution, admitted the liberals to power and expelled all Russian officials from the principality, including the four ministers. He thereby placed an affront upon the Tsar, which the latter never forgave. The Bulgarian prince then assumed supreme control of his own dominions and gave free rein to the national aspirations of his people; but from political necessity he continued his efforts to appease the offended majesty of Russia.

In 1885 occurred the bloodless revolution of Philippopolis, when the inhabitants of that city, with

Prince Alexander's consent, expelled the Turkish governor from their midst and proclaimed the union of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria. This event still further incensed the Russian Government, and roused the jealousy of King Milan of Serbia, who, on pretence of preserving the balance of power in the Balkan States, at once invaded Bulgaria. The Bulgarian army was inexperienced and without its Russian officers, but, contrary to expectation, Prince Alexander inflicted a severe defeat upon the Serbians at Slivnitsa and again at Pirot. He then prepared to occupy Belgrade, but the intervention of Austria compelled him to stay his advance and to consent to an armistice. After prolonged negotiations, peace between the two belligerents was signed at Bucharest in March 1886. With regard to Eastern Roumelia, a compromise was effected, with the consent of the Porte, by which Prince Alexander was appointed governor-general of the province for a term of five years, and the union of the two States was practically achieved.

Bulgaria had triumphed, but the Tsar's animosity was the more increased. Before six months had passed (August 1886), Prince Alexander had been kidnapped in his palace at Sofia by Russian agents, compelled to sign an abdication and conveyed a close prisoner to Reni on the Danube. There he was handed over to the Russian authorities, and thence, by order of the Tsar, he was sent to Austria.

Meanwhile at Sofia, a counter-revolution organised by Stambulof, the head of the nationalist party, had overthrown the Russian provisional Government, and the Bulgars clamoured for the return of their rightful ruler. Prince Alexander obeyed the call, but, in spite of his conciliatory efforts, the Tsar refused to sanction his reinstatement, or to permit the leaders of the abduction plot to be punished. Finding his position impossible in the face of such determined opposition,

Prince Alexander issued a manifesto resigning the throne, and in September 1886 he left Bulgaria for ever.

A fortnight later, General Kaulbars arrived from Petersburg with instructions to promote Russian interests and to obtain the election of Prince Nicholas of Mingrelia to the vacant throne. But, foiled by the efforts of Stambulof and the nationalists, Kaulbars failed in his mission, and in 1887, in spite of Russian resistance, the crown was offered to Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, who accepted it.

The Tsar refrained from all but diplomatic interference in these complications and resolutely declined to embroil Russia in a war with Austria, or with any other Power. He thereby greatly increased his own political prestige and the stability of his empire. The pursuance of this permanently peaceful foreign policy may be said to have counterbalanced the retrogressive tendencies of his internal administration; during his reign the financial condition of Russia was improved, her natural resources were developed and her political and commercial intercourse was extended by treaties with the East and West, as well as by the opening of the Trans-Caspian and Trans-Siberian railways across Asia.

The Emperor joined in the age-long struggle of his ancestors against the universal corruption in Russian public life, and endeavoured to purge the administration of its abuses, but without effecting any very great reform. During the terrible famine of 1891, he took a prominent part in alleviating the sufferings of his people, and he showed himself animated at all times by a strong sense of the sacredness and responsibilities of his high calling. On 1st November 1894, he died at Livadia, in the Crimea, after a brief illness, and was succeeded by his eldest son.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEATH OF AUTOCRACY

1894–1918

NICHOLAS II was twenty-six years old at the time of his accession. In childhood his frail health and appearance had given cause for much anxiety, but he gradually outgrew this early delicacy, and, although he never attained to his father's stature and robust build, he became capable of great physical endurance and skilled in all forms of outdoor sport.

He had received an unusually sound and comprehensive education under the best native and foreign tutors, not the least important factor in his mental development having been a voyage round the world in 1890. In the course of this tour he visited Egypt, India, China and Japan, cut the first sod of the eastern terminus of the great Trans-Siberian railway at Vladivostock in 1891, and narrowly escaped assassination at the hands of a Japanese fanatic.

At the time of his father's death, Nicholas was betrothed to Princess Alix of Hesse, and, in accordance with the late Emperor's dying wish, the Princess was baptized into the Greek Church under the name of Alexandra Feodorovna, and married to the young Tsar three weeks after his accession.

Upright, deeply religious, high-principled and well-intentioned, Nicholas II as far surpassed the noblest of his forbears in his natural qualities, as he outshone them in intelligence and cultivation. But he had

inherited the fatal vacillation and weakness of his race and was always at the mercy of his environment, which traits the retiring gentleness and domesticity of his disposition tended to increase. Like his father, Nicholas shunned the glare of publicity and surrounded himself with a wall of impenetrable mystery which it is difficult for a British mind to understand, accustomed as it is to the frankness of our free press and democratic royalties. The Tsar had favourites, but no confidants. It is doubtful if any, even the most intimate of his *entourage*, ever attained to more than a partial knowledge of their Imperial master and his wife. Hence arises the conflicting evidence even of persons closely connected with the Russian Court, which makes it almost impossible to form a just estimate of the influences at work within its circle.

Obstinate with the deadly obstinacy of a weak man, but autocratic in theory only, Nicholas was always dominated by a stronger mind, and during the early part of his reign that domination was exercised by the old court party, led by the Empress-Dowager, by the Tsar's uncles the Grand Dukes Sergius and Alexis and by reactionary ministers such as Plehve and Mouraviev. After the birth of the Tsarevitch in 1904, the scene changed; the lovely, gifted, but ill-fated Empress Alexandra exerted her influence over the mind of the plastic Emperor, and thenceforward practically ruled the empire, to the ruin of the Imperial prestige and the destruction of her husband's throne and dynasty. Womanlike, she seemed incapable of disinterested motives. She intrigued, not for the national good, but for the welfare of those near and dear to her, while she alienated the people by her pride, her want of sympathy, her supposed pro-German tendencies and by the morbid mysticism which rendered her the prey of profligate charlatans, such as the peasant Rasputin and his mistress Anna

Vyrubov. In later life, the Tsaritsa's mental and physical health gave way under the strain of constant anxiety for the safety of her husband and her only son, which accounts for the scenes of hysterical violence and the amazing political and social indiscretions of which she was so often guilty. Like her prototype Marie Antoinette, she was, at times, more sinned against than sinning—witness the popular belief in her Teutonic prejudices and the recent refutation of that and other slanders by the examination of her private papers. But she was undoubtedly the main cause of her husband's overthrow. If the tragic reign of Nicholas II is to be judged impartially, it is necessary to take account of the adverse influences which contributed to that tragedy, and while discarding the calumnies of journalism and party politics, to disentangle, as far as possible, the truth concerning circumstances which ousted autocracy from the throne, to establish Bolshevism and anarchy in its stead.

The Tsar's coronation took place in May 1895, with all the gorgeous ceremonial of the Eastern Church and the customary concessions and gratuities to the people. But the popular rejoicings were marred by the disaster of the Khodinski Field, a large open space on the outskirts of Moscow, where nearly 30,000 country people had assembled to take part in the coronation festivities. Owing to defective arrangements and to an unexplained outbreak of panic, about 2000 of these unfortunates were trampled to death by the surging multitude. The catastrophe cast a gloom over the whole nation and was bewailed by the superstitious Russians as auguring ill for the new reign.

Nicholas retained most of his father's ministers in office, and, to the disappointment of the liberals, he pursued the same foreign and domestic policy, with but few alterations. He warned his people, in an

early manifesto, against foolish dreams of political independence and declared his intention of devoting all his energies to the welfare of Russia, while at the same time preserving the autocratic power intact, as he had inherited it from his predecessor. His internal administration, however, was more moderate and more humane than that of Alexander III. Efforts were made to improve the conditions of the working classes by the erection of model buildings, while the disgraceful religious persecutions of the last reign practically ceased.

Abroad, the secret agreement with France developed into a formal alliance, and, in 1896, friendly relations with other nations were augmented by an official tour of western Europe, when the Tsar, accompanied by his wife, visited the courts of each of the Great Powers.

In the Far East, the Chino-Japanese war for the suzerainty of Korea had terminated in the peace of Shimonosaki, and the subsequent modification of the Treaty by that of Tokio, when Russia, England and France, to preserve the balance of oriental power—and incidentally to further their own interests—obliged Japan to restore the greater part of her annexations. As a reward for this timely intervention, Russia, like her coadjutors, obtained large concessions of Chinese territory, which she afterwards increased by means of financial and commercial treaties, by the extension of the Trans-Siberian railway, and, in 1898, by the acquisition of the Liaotung Peninsula, with the important harbours of Port Arthur and Talienwan.

In spite of frontier conventions, Russia's advance in Turkestan and the Pamirs likewise continued, and in 1897 the enlargement of her Asiatic possessions necessitated a reorganisation in their administration, by which all territory west of Lake Baikal was controlled by the Governor-General of Turkestan and that east of the lake by the Governor-General of the Amur.

About this time, revolutionary intrigues in Armenia against the authority of the Porte, and religious strife between the Christian and Mussulman population, culminated in the famous Turkish atrocities of 1895, which once more concentrated European attention on the fate of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire. Massacre followed massacre in rapid succession. As many as 50,000 Christians suffered death at the hands of their oppressors, till finally, in 1896, the Powers intervened on behalf of reform and religious toleration. But the Sultan refused to accede to these demands, and the Powers, with the exception of England, were averse to coercive measures. Thus the matter was allowed to drop and western sympathy with Armenia was forgotten amid the international complications of the Graeco-Turkish war in Crete.

In Crete, as in Armenia, the political aspirations of the Christians and religious differences with their Moslem rulers led to constant insurrections, which, in 1896, developed into actual civil war. Early in 1897 the Cretan revolutionists proclaimed the union of their island with the Hellenic kingdom, and a contingent of Greek troops under Colonel Vassos landed to take possession in the name of King George. The six Great Powers vetoed this annexation as prejudicial to the equilibrium of the Balkan States, and, summoning Greece to withdraw her forces, they sent an allied squadron to isolate the disturbance and to restore order by blockading the Cretan coast. Greece refused to obey the summons; and by continuing her aggressions and her hostile preparations, she provoked a declaration of war from the Porte in April. In the brief campaign which followed, the Hellenes were utterly defeated and compelled to beg the intervention of Russia, "to arrest the Ottoman invasion and save Greece from total ruin." At the Tsar's request the Sultan granted an armistice in May,

and after prolonged negotiations peace was signed at Constantinople in December. By this treaty, Greece was obliged to pay a large indemnity and to submit to a slight modification of her frontiers; but, through the mediation of the Powers, the Sultan agreed to recognise the autonomy of Crete, and in November 1898, on the Tsar's recommendation, practically to sanction the absorption of the island into the Hellenic kingdom, by approving the appointment of Prince George of Greece as its governor-general.

M. de Giers was dead, and his successor Prince Lobanov strove to check Austrian encroachments in the Balkan Peninsula, by restoring Russian supremacy. Recognising the importance of maintaining his influence in south-eastern Europe, the Tsar's good offices were not confined to Greece therefore, and he strengthened the existing friendship with Roumania and Montenegro, besides healing the breach with Bulgaria by a formal recognition of Prince Ferdinand as its legitimate sovereign.

In spite of these pacific principles, the constantly increasing armaments of the continental States necessitated a corresponding augmentation of her military forces on the part of Russia, and the consequent drain on her finances was very great. To lighten this burden, Nicholas, in 1898, issued an invitation to all the Powers to a Conference, to consider (*a*) "The grave question of the excessive armaments which weighed upon all nations, with a view to putting an end to their progressive development. (*b*) More humane methods of war. (*c*) The employment of good offices of mediation and arbitration, in cases lending themselves thereto." The delegates of twenty-six nations met at the Hague in May 1899, under the presidency of Baron de Staël, the Russian ambassador in London, and the twenty-seven articles of the Convention were signed and duly ratified a few months later by all the

Powers, with the exception of China. In reality, however, the Conference proved abortive, chiefly owing to the determined opposition of Germany and to the fact that the disarmament of nations was unanimously deemed impracticable.

In these proposals, the Tsar was animated by a sincere desire to benefit humanity. The same instinct prompted him to sanction several judicial, educational and administrative reforms in his own empire, while, at the representation of Count Witte, the Finance Minister, the commercial prosperity of the nation was enhanced by new canals, an increased railway system, improved postal and telegraphic facilities and by the introduction of a standard gold coinage, instead of the paper money previously in circulation.

With the double object of increasing the revenue and protecting the public health, an edict was passed in 1897, which converted the sale of alcohol into a Government monopoly. But, although the first object of the scheme was undoubtedly attained, the temptation to add to these profits led to the establishment of Government drink-shops in every village, which encouraged drunkenness among the peasantry, to the detriment of their moral and physical development. Averse to curtailing its gains, the Government shut its eyes to the evil, of which probably the Tsar remained in total ignorance; for his knowledge of public affairs was confined to the more or less veracious reports of his chief ministers, which they in their turn gleaned from their subordinates. Freed from the iron rule of Alexander III, the engrained corruption of Russian bureaucracy flourished unchecked. Bribery, even in the highest Government offices, became a recognised means to an end, while the existence of such institutions as the "Black Cabinet," within the very walls of the General Post Office, for the censorship of all private

and public correspondence, prevented the exposure of any administrative scandal.

In spite of his humanitarian principles, Nicholas retained his inherited beliefs in the inviolability of the autocratic power and the necessity of converting Russia into a homogeneous empire.

Poland and the Baltic States, which had been crushed into submission by the events of the last reign, were treated with moderation and were granted certain religious and educational concessions, calculated to assuage the bitterness of unification with Russia.

But Finland, who still retained her individuality and exacted a ratification of the Act of Assurance from each successive Tsar, suffered more severely. Every effort was made to deprive her of her cherished liberties, her national institutions and her autonomous Government; and these constant encroachments on their independence naturally aroused much ill-feeling among the people. In 1899, an extraordinary Diet was convoked, to consider certain military reforms which were directly opposed to the Act of Assurance, in that they involved the incorporation of the national army with that of Russia, and the right of the Imperial Government to act independently of the Finnish Diet. The Grand Duchy respectfully protested against these flagrant breaches of its fundamental laws, and presented a memorial calling attention to the terms of the Constitution. But it was informed that local rights must give way to Imperial requirements. A deputation of delegates from each town and village was then sent to Petersburg, to entreat the Tsar to respect their ancient privileges and to observe the terms of the Act of Assurance, as his predecessors had done; but the deputation was not received, and many of its members were afterwards expelled from Finland, as a punishment for their temerity. Under Bobrikov, the governor-general, the Russification of Finland

continued, and in spite of persistent opposition, was mercilessly enforced; with the result that hundreds of the people emigrated to America and other countries rather than submit. In this way the prosperity of Finland, once the most loyal and industrious of the Russian dependencies, was ruined.

Meanwhile, Russian ambitions in the Far East and the rapid emergence of Japan from comparative insignificance, to the position of a primary Power politically opposed to all foreign influence in Manchuria and Korea, led to diplomatic complications, which were aggravated, in 1900, by the timber and mining concessions granted to Muscovite subjects on the Yalu. Japan, to whose existence the integrity of Korea was an essential factor, protested at this infringement of recent treaties, and, fortified by an offensive and defensive alliance with Great Britain in 1902, she forced Russia, by the Manchurian Convention of 1903, to promise the evacuation of Chinese territory within a limited time. Russia, however, failed to observe the terms of this agreement, and, in July 1903, she unmasked her determination to annex Manchuria, by appointing Admiral Alexiev to the "Imperial Lieutenancy of the Far East," with supreme control of all Russian matters in the Orient. Japan then opened friendly negotiations at Petersburg, with a view to obtaining recognition of her rights in Korea, as well as a guarantee that Russia would "respect the independence and territorial integrity of China and Korea . . . and maintain equality for the commerce of all nations in those two countries." Russia declined to pledge herself to these conditions and gave further proof of her hostile intentions by requesting Japan "to declare Manchuria and its littoral outside the sphere of her interests," and to agree to the renunciation of other rights which it was the main object of Japanese diplomacy to secure. Japan thereupon issued an ultimatum,

and, having failed to elicit a reply within the stipulated time, she declared war in February 1904.

The ill-founded confidence of her diplomats, led Russia to underrate the resources of her enemy, for she could not believe that a small Power of such recent development as Japan, would dare to pit herself against her mighty empire. She therefore treated the Japanese proposals with galling contempt, and by her deliberately aggressive policy provoked a war which was intensely unpopular with the nation and served only to expose to all the world the corruption and inefficiency of her naval and military systems. Her soldiers were ill-equipped and ill-led, many of her ships and guns were obsolete; while, in spite of the marvels of organisation achieved by Prince Khilkov, the Director of the Russian Ministry of Ways and Communications, the difficulties of supplying and reinforcing an army at the extremity of 5000 miles of a single railway line, were wellnigh insuperable.

Japan, on the other hand, was comparatively close to the scene of operations; the whole-hearted support of her population of forty-six millions was at her back, and her army and navy, besides being the best that patriotism and modern knowledge could produce, were commanded by such men as Field-Marshal Oyama, Generals Nogi and Kuroki, Admirals Togo and Kamimura, and by others whose names will go down in history as foremost among the great captains of their day.

The Japanese success, therefore, was brilliant and continuous. Beginning the advance towards the line of the Yalu in April, Kuroki forced the crossing of the river near Wiju on the 29th, and, after three days fighting, defeated the Russians under Sassulitch with great slaughter. Ensuing months witnessed the capture of Dalny (Talienwan) and Liauyang; the successive defeats of Kuropatkin, the Russian commander-in-chief,

at Kinchow, Telissu, the Shaho, and at Heikautal; while February 1905 saw the beginning of the fierce conflict round Mukden, which, a fortnight later, resulted in the occupation of that city by the victorious Japanese. The unfortunate Kuropatkin, whose dilatory methods had aroused universal reprobation, was superseded by General Linievitch; but the latter, in spite of his reputation, was no more successful than his predecessor. The Japanese carried all before them in southern Manchuria and annexed the Russian dependency of Sakhalin in July.

Throughout 1904, however, the main objective of the Japanese attack, both by sea and land, was Port Arthur, the centre of Russian naval power in the Pacific, and reputed the most impregnable of modern first-class fortresses. Within its walls a defective strategy had concentrated 30,000 men under General Stössel, while the harbour afforded shelter to the Russian Pacific fleet. The Japanese strained every nerve to capture this rich prize, and, in spite of the valiant and obstinate resistance of the garrison, the investment of Port Arthur by land was effected in July and its fleet was annihilated by Togo in December. After eleven months of ceaseless fighting, Stössel surrendered to General Nogi on the last day of 1904, and Japanese supremacy in the Liaotung Peninsula was complete.

Meanwhile the Russian Baltic fleet, under Admiral Rojdestvensky, had left Libau on 15th October 1904, and was making a leisurely progress East, by way of the Cape,—in the course of which journey the famous Dogger Bank incident occurred, when the Hull fishing fleet was fired upon at midnight, on 21st October, by the Russian battleships. Rojdestvensky reached the scene of war in May 1905. On 27th May, his fleet of 38 vessels was met off Tsushima, in the Sea of Japan, by the united Japanese squadrons under

Admiral Togo, and after two days' fighting was almost annihilated. Rojdestvensky and 8000 of his men were taken prisoners, 22 of the Russian battleships were sunk, 6 were captured and the remaining 10 were interned after flight to neutral ports. The Japanese losses amounted to only 3 torpedo boats, and, although other vessels sustained more or less injury, none of them was incapacitated for future service. The casualties throughout the entire fleet amounted to 116 killed and 538 wounded. With quaint, but characteristic modesty, Admiral Togo attributed his victory to "the virtues of H.M. the Emperor of Japan, and not to any human prowess," and the small number of casualties to "the protection of the spirits of the Imperial ancestors."

"Thus, after eighteen months of bitter war, Japan had utterly destroyed two Russian fleets, taken the fortress of Port Arthur and driven the Russian armies from southern Manchuria, after inflicting upon them a loss of over 350,000 killed, wounded and prisoners. From almost every single conflict by land and sea, Japan had emerged victorious, and scarce one passing gleam of triumph had shone upon the bayonets of the Tsar." (*The Times*, 31st August 1905.)

The little island empire had fulfilled her task, and, in June, President Roosevelt intervened to urge the claims of peace upon the two belligerents. Through the good offices of the United States, negotiations were opened at Portsmouth, in New Hampshire, and the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth on 29th August, brought the war to a close. The question of an indemnity was waived; but Russia was compelled to evacuate Manchuria and to cede the Liaotung Peninsula and the southern portion of Sakhalin to Japan, thereby seriously affecting her expansion in the Far East and her international prestige.

By her tyranny in the Orient, Russia had over-

reached herself, and she was to repeat the mistake at home, with even more disastrous results. Popular discontent was growing, aggravated by the social and agrarian troubles of the peasantry, the ignominious issue of the Japanese war and the revolutionary propaganda of a vast, secret political society, which had branches all over the empire and was headed by many of the most influential men of the day. Numerous strikes and other agitations occurred, which were none too gently repressed by the troops of the Imperial Government, and, in July 1904, the seething indignation of the Socialists found expression in the assassination of M. Plehve, the Prime Minister.

The 9th January 1905 witnessed the ill-fated demonstration on " Red Sunday," when 200,000 workmen, led by Father Gapon, a priest, marched from all parts of Petersburg and its environs, to the Winter Palace, to lay their grievances before the Tsar and to demand civic and political rights for their order. The Imperial family being as usual at Tsarskoe Selo, the deputation could not be received, but the mob, not crediting the information, refused to move. After repeated warnings from General Trepov, the Governor-General of Petersburg, the soldiers, at his order, opened fire upon the people and hundreds were killed. Gapon fled, and escaped to France, where he remained until the political amnesty in October. But he was proved to have been a police spy in disguise, and, soon after his return to Russia, he was murdered by members of the revolutionary party he had betrayed.

In February, the Grand Duke Serge, the Tsar's uncle and a confirmed reactionary, was blown to pieces by a bomb in Moscow, while other political assassinations occurred, which were afterwards traced to the agency of a man named Azev, who was leading a double life as a trusted emissary of the " Okhrana " or Secret Police, and as a leading member of the

Terrorists. Revolution was in the air. The garrisons mutinied at Kronstadt, Kiev and Sevastopol, while the crew of the battleship "Potemkin" shot their officers, shelled Odessa and then took their vessel to the Roumanian port of Constanza, where they disappeared. Riots broke out all over the country, and agrarian risings occurred in the Baltic provinces, where the Lettish and Esthonian peasantry turned against the German-speaking landowners and put many of them to death.

In May, the Tsar appointed a commission to inquire into these disorders, and held out vague hopes of a national assembly in the near future. But nothing definite was done to appease the popular discontent, and the fight between autocracy and the people continued.

In October, Russia was paralysed by a general strike, when more than a million operatives ceased work, and for several days the capital was deprived of its electric light, water supply, trains, newspapers and daily posts. The days were past when the populace could be cowed into submission by coercive measures. It became more and more evident that some concessions were necessary to pacify the country; and at last, on 30th October, the Tsar was persuaded to issue an ukase, which granted "permanent foundations of civic freedom, on the principles of inviolability of person, liberty of conscience, of speech, of meeting and of association," and announced the creation of a constitutional Government, with the approaching convocation of a national Duma or Parliament.

Count Witte, who is believed to have been the originator of this manifesto, was newly returned from the Peace Conference in America, and it is possible that he brought with him some glimmering of the fact that autocracy was out of date and democracy in the ascendant. To Nicholas II, however, autocracy was

a sacred trust, every particle of which it was his duty to preserve and transmit intact to his successor. He regarded his recent concessions, therefore, in the light of a temporary surrender to superior force, and, encouraged by the palace-clique, he set himself at once to recover the liberties he had yielded under pressure and to defend his authority against all future infringements.

Stolypin, who succeeded Count Witte as Prime Minister, was an honest patriot, but he supported the absolutist theories of his Imperial master and inaugurated a fierce counter-revolution, with the object of choking national emancipation at its birth. Under plea of restoring order and pacifying the country, he repressed all progressive elements with ruthless severity. Through the agency of the " Black Hundreds " (a reactionary organisation connected with the Okhrana), he proclaimed martial law in over 200 Russian cities, under cover of which, repeated " pogroms " or massacres took place, not only against the Jews, who were regarded as mainly responsible for the revolution, but against all aliens and other persons suspected of Jacobin sympathies.

By these measures the upheaval of 1905 was temporarily crushed ; and autocracy, having seemingly triumphed, began to show signs of retracting even those limited reforms which had been extracted from it in October. The result was a renewed outbreak of insurrection, notably at Moscow, where the citizens and students erected barricades in the streets and maintained their resistance to the Imperial troops for nearly a fortnight. In the face of this violent manifestation of popular feeling, the Government was forced to yield ; the Tsar opened the first Duma in person, in May 1906, and the rioting ceased at once.

The Duma was divided into two estates : the Upper House, composed of the Imperial Council and of a

certain proportion of members nominated by the Emperor; and a Lower House or State Duma, consisting of the elected representatives of the nation. The first Duma, however, was a mere parody of a national assembly, deprived of all real authority in public affairs, unconnected with the Government and limited by clauses in its constitution, which enabled the Tsar and his Cabinet to make or unmake any law without its assistance. It pleased no party; for the conservatives regarded it as a dangerous innovation, while the liberals considered it as not sufficiently representative.

The parties composing the Lower House, or State Duma, soon became clearly defined. They comprised the reactionaries or Extreme Right; the Nationalists, who were imperialist and conservative in their views; the Octobrists or moderate reformers, who took their name from the date of the Imperial manifesto; the Constitutional Democrats or Kadets, so called from the two first initials (Ka. Dé.) of their Russian name; and the advanced Socialists or Labour party on the Extreme Left, who later split up into two sections—the Maximalists or Bolsheviks and the Minimalists or Mensheviks.

Within its limits, this first assembly strove to remedy some of the crying evils of the administration, but its demands for political and agrarian reform were refused by the Government, and in July 1906 the Duma was dissolved.

The ejected members then issued a proclamation from Finland, calling upon the Russian people to refuse to pay taxes, or to render military service, until their national parliament had been re-established; and the manifesto gave the signal for a fresh outburst of revolutionary excesses. Stolypin retaliated with a political persecution more bloodthirsty even than the pogroms of the Black Hundreds. Gibbets known as

" Stolypin's neckties " were erected in every province, and, in the course of the next five years, as many as 15,000 persons are said to have been hung as revolutionary agitators, while thousands were imprisoned, banished, or deprived of civic rights.

In spite of these barbarities, the demand for national representation grew too vehement to be ignored, and in February 1907, the second Duma was convoked, only to suffer, a few months later, the fate of its predecessor, as obstructive to Government measures for suppressing disorder.

By considerable concessions to the peasant Zemstvos and by raising the electoral qualifications, Stolypin managed, in the interval before the induction of the next assembly, to reduce the ranks of the Socialists and to increase those of the Conservatives on the right benches of the Lower House. Even so, the third Duma was overwhelmingly liberal, and, in spite of Government opposition, it succeeded in effecting a few minor reforms and in prolonging its existence until 1912, when its full term of five years expired.

The fourth Duma, which met in the autumn of the same year, was more evenly arranged; the right counterbalanced the left, reactionary influence was strong, and at first the House seemed disposed tamely to submit both to Government abuses and to Imperial despotism.

The fact must now be recalled that the most ardent supporter of the autocracy, the real ruler of the empire at this time, was the Empress Alexandra, who in her turn was entirely swayed by the strange personality of the notorious Rasputin.

Gregory (Grischka) Rasputin was born in 1871, in the village of Pokrovskoe, in the Siberian Government of Tomsk. He was of the lowest peasant origin and utterly illiterate. His real patronymic was Efim, but he had acquired the sobriquet of Rasputin (the dis-

solute) by his early obscenities and the frequent crimes by which he had incurred the penalties of the law. In early manhood he came into contact with a saintly parish priest, who endeavoured to reform the youthful sinner and who so far succeeded, that Rasputin entered a monastery and emerged a few months later in the guise of a " Staretz " or lay-preacher, who wandered from village to village, preaching the gospel and living on the charity of his hearers. Gradually Rasputin established a reputation among the superstitious peasantry as a mystic and a holy man ; the reports of his miracles and his saintliness spread far and wide, and his creed, that " only by sinning can we gain salvation," enabled him and his followers to indulge in every kind of vice. About the year 1906, he came to Petersburg, where his fame as a spiritualist and a faith-healer had preceded him, and, having obtained an introduction to the venerable Metropolitan Theophanes, Rasputin soon became the oracle of the most exclusive circles in Russian society. The reports of the bacchanalian rites practised by the " saint " and his disciples, do not bear repetition, but his power over women, even the most gently nurtured, was enormous. He was declared to be the prophet, almost the essence of the Deity, and his coarse manners and speech, his unkempt appearance, his very sensuality, were regarded as evidences of a nature too guileless and unsophisticated for a material world to understand.

One of Rasputin's most ardent and intimate devotees was Madame Anna Vyrubov, a *divorcée* of German extraction and somewhat unsavoury reputation, but who was nevertheless the Empress's lady-in-waiting and closest *confidante*. At Madame Vyrubov's suggestion, Rasputin was called in to heal the little Tsarevitch Alexis, who suffered from birth from the Hesse disease of hæmophilia. On the child's recovery, the Tsaritsa, in her joy and gratitude, was easily per-

suaded to believe that the " saint's " prayers had effected the cure and that he was indeed, as he declared, commissioned by Heaven to protect the life of her son. From that moment the illiterate peasant became all-powerful at court, while his influence over the Empress, who ruled the Tsar, gave him practically supreme authority in Russia. He could, as he openly boasted, make or unmake a minister ; his enemies were removed from office, or banished, and his friends, however low and disgraceful their origin, were raised to positions of wealth and honour in both Church and State. His domination of the Empress did infinite harm to the Imperial prestige and was the cause of the intense hatred with which she was regarded by the nation ; but her feeling for her tyrant was the religious fanaticism of a hysterical, unbalanced woman, and all other insinuations are purely calumnious. Alexandra believed implicitly in Rasputin as a saint, while she revered him as her son's guardian-angel and as a simple peasant, whose sublime faith, like that of the apostles of old, rendered his prayers acceptable in the sight of Heaven.

The Tsar was aware of Rasputin's scandalous reputation, and, in response to the remonstrances of his friends, the opprobrium of the nation and the open references in the Duma to " the occult and sinister influences at Court," he endeavoured on several occasions to rid himself of the disreputable adventurer. Each such effort, however, led to violent scenes with the Empress, till Nicholas, who was accustomed to follow the path of least resistance where his wife was concerned, finally desisted from the attempt, with the philosophical remark, " Better one Rasputin than ten hysterics." It is affirmed, moreover, that as Rasputin could cure the Tsarevitch, so, by the hand of his accomplice Anna Vyrubov, he could artificially make him ill. At all events, his departure from court invari-

ably coincided with a recurrence of the child's disease; a telegram from the frantic mother pursued the "healer" on his journey, and Rasputin returned to Petersburg, more powerful and more indispensable than ever.

Such was the state of affairs in Russia in 1911, in the autumn of which year Stolypin was shot by Bagrov, the agent of the Okhrana, especially responsible for his safety. This occurred under the very eyes of the Tsar, at a gala performance of the opera in Kiev. About the same time, Rasputin, who until then had confined his ambitions to smart society in Petersburg, began to dabble in politics and, as he bragged, to rule Russia through the Empress and the reactionary ministers whom his influence had placed in power. The Tsar, sunk apparently in the apathy of indifference, or despair, remained a mere puppet in the hands of his wife and her infamous favourites, and Russia's international prestige was proportionately depressed.

In spite of the anti-Russian sympathies of Great Britain during the Japanese war, the aggressive attitude of the Central Powers in the East paved the way towards a mutual understanding between Russia and England, and in 1907, the two nations concluded a defensive alliance which gradually widened into the Triple Entente with France, in opposition to the Triple Alliance.

In 1909, Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, and connived at the *coup d'état* by which Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria boldly renounced the suzerainty of the Porte and declared himself an independent monarch. Russia wished to protest, but, finding that Germany intended to support her ally, she was obliged to give way, while Turkey, likewise, was in no condition to offer effective resistance to these encroachments.

Two years later (1911), the Balkan States united in the Balkan League created by M. Venizelos, the

Grecian Premier, and relying on the rapid decay of the Ottoman empire, they declared war on the Porte, with the object of renouncing Turkish hegemony. They were successful, and an armistice was signed in 1912. But in 1913, a quarrel fomented by Austria broke out among the allies, and the belligerents appealed to Russia for arbitration. By the Peace of Bucharest which followed, Bulgaria gained less than she expected ; while Serbia, in spite of Austrian opposition, achieved the expansion towards the Adriatic, for which she had long striven. Austria and Bulgaria, united by a common grievance and supported by Germany, determined to readjust the Balkan equilibrium to suit their own interests, and the military preparations of the Central Powers necessitated a similar increase in the armaments of the Triple Entente. Europe has been likened to " a vast powder magazine, which the slightest spark might explode," and the spark fell on 14th June 1914.

Serbia had long desired to unite Bosnia and Herzegovina under her own rule, so that the murder of the Austrian heir-apparent and his wife at Sarajevo, by Serbian revolutionaries, was construed by Austria into a deliberate act of hostility. She forwarded an ultimatum which would have reduced Serbia to the position of a vassal state, and with which, therefore, it was impossible for the latter to comply. Serbia temporised, but it was evident that Austria meant war ; and Russia, who could not in her own interests permit the annihilation of a Balkan State by a Central Power, began to mobilise her forces on the Austrian frontier. Germany thereupon issued a threatening Note, demanding instant demobilisation, and, having failed to obtain an answer within the stipulated twenty-four hours, declared war on Russia on 1st August 1914. The Great European conflict had begun.

The war was popular in Russia. The Germans were

hated, and the Emperor's manifesto, pledging himself "not to sheathe the sword until the last enemy soldier had been driven from Russian territory," occasioned an outburst of patriotism and loyalty among all classes, which, if taken advantage of at the time, might even then have saved the dynasty and caused the nation once more to rally round its Tsar. The issue of certain decrees—notably those prohibiting the sale of alcohol in Russia and promising autonomy to Poland—went far to propitiate the educated middle-classes or "Intelligents" as they were called, who formed the brain of the revolutionary party. Unfortunately, Rasputin, the real cause of Russia's downfall, remained in power. His open denunciation of the war gave rise to the universal belief that he was a German agent, and that the Empress, who supported him, must therefore be pro-German likewise. In Russia, as in other countries, German propaganda was doing its deadly work; there were plenty of spies abroad to complete the disaffection of the masses and to accentuate the fact that the Empress, several of the Grand Duchesses and many highly-placed officials, were of German birth, presumably imbued with German sympathies. The country therefore embarked upon the war under the impression that the Government was, at heart, false to the national cause. Had the struggle been successful, this feeling might have been dispelled, but, in spite of her limitless man-power, Russia was technically unfit for war; her organisation was defective, her armies ill-equipped and her lack of munition factories contributed to the disastrous shortage of guns and ammunition which led to her undoing in 1915.

The campaign of 1914, under the supreme command of the Tsar's relative, the Grand Duke Nicholas, opened favourably on the whole; for, though the invasion of East Prussia was repulsed by Hindenburg at Tannenberg, with heavy loss, the Russians gained

several brilliant victories against the Austrians in Galicia, overran the province, captured Tarnapol, Halicz and Lemberg, and besieged Przemysl, which capitulated in 1915. Then it was that the criminal deficiency of munitions occurred, which limited the daily Russian fire, in some places, to two shells per cannon and four cartridges per rifle, and which forced whole regiments to face the attack unarmed. Mackensen, who seems to have known of the impending shortage, through his spies, seized the opportunity to begin his great advance, and having annihilated several divisions of his unarmed foes, he drove the remaining Russian armies before him, till he had forced them back almost to their own borders.

The man directly responsible for these disasters, was General Sukhomlinov, the Russian War Minister, who not only refused offers of arms from the allies, but constantly assured the Grand Duke Nicholas that the supply of shells would be amply sufficient for the needs of the offensive. Sukhomlinov's treachery was never actually proved, but facts looked black against him, while his wife—a Jewess, of German origin and doubtful antecedents—was also involved. Supported by Rasputin and the Empress, the minister nevertheless retained his portfolio, and no inquiry was instituted, till fresh revelations at last obliged the Tsar to yield to popular clamour and to permit the general's incarceration in the Petrapavlovski fortress, to await his trial. He was, however, soon afterwards released on plea of ill-health, and the matter was hushed up till after the revolution, when Sukhomlinov was re-arrested by the Provisional Government, tried, and condemned to penal servitude for life.

Nicholas II was sincerely anxious to win the war, and it is now known that neither he nor his wife ever swerved from their fidelity to the allied cause. But the Sukhomlinov affair aggravated the national mis-

trust of the dynasty, while the retreat of the Russian armies caused a general consternation, which changed to bitter indignation when the reason of the defeat became known.

In an incredibly short time the energy and administrative ability of General Polivanov, the new War Minister, had supplied the Russian armies with sufficient arms and ammunition to enable them once more to take the field. But at Rasputin's instigation, Polivanov was replaced by a less competent successor, while the Grand Duke Nicholas, who had been mainly responsible for the fall of Sukhomlinov, was recalled from the western front and given the minor appointment of commander-in-chief of the Caucasian forces.

The Tsar himself assumed the supreme command in Galicia, with General Alexiev as his chief of staff; but, although the latter did his utmost to restore the morale of the troops and to support the allies by creating a diversion on the German front, he was unable to do more than hold the enemy in check. General Brusilov, however, achieved considerable success in Volhynia in the summer of 1916, and in the Caucasus the Grand Duke Nicholas carried all before him and captured Erzeroum.

But in spite of these triumphs, the tremendous loss of life in the face of the enemy's superior artillery, the skilful introduction of German propaganda and the internal disorganisation of Russia completed the demoralisation of the army. Food stuffs and transport became inadequate, partly owing to waste and mismanagement, partly to the constant change of ministers inspired by Rasputin and his satellites, which prevented any co-operative measures being taken to ensure the proper administration of the army supplies.

Stürmer, a German, was Premier and Foreign Minister at this time, with Protopov, a renegade liberal, as his coadjutor. Both were entirely subservient

to the wishes of Rasputin and the Empress who had placed them in power, consequently neither possessed the confidence of the country. They were suspected of trying to negotiate a separate peace with Germany, which, by liberating the Russian Government from the disabilities of war, would leave its ministers free to devote their whole energy to the suppression of the Duma and to the retention of their own office.

The failure to relieve Lemberg in the summer of 1916, or to prevent the annihilation of Roumania, dealt a severe blow to the national self-esteem; while the realisation that Russia—the richest food-producing country in the world—could no longer feed her own population, increased the general indignation at the incompetence and corruption of the autocratic régime. The Duma, awaking from its lethargy, reassembled in November, and by the mouth of Miliukov, a Kadet, and other leading members of the Lower House, it uttered a scathing denunciation of the ministerial mismanagement, coupled with a demand that Stürmer and Protopov should be dismissed, as guilty of trading with the enemy. All parties then united in a firm though loyal manifesto, petitioning the Tsar to create a stable Government which should possess the confidence of the nation and be empowered to effect the many political and administrative reforms of which the empire stood in need.

For this act of insubordination the Duma was prorogued, and, although Stürmer resigned, he was compensated with the post of Court Chamberlain, while Protopov, who had been the main object of the attack, remained at the head of affairs.

The reassembly of the Duma was fixed for January 1917; but before the session opened, Rasputin was killed on 30th December 1916, through the agency of Purishkevitch, a member of the Duma, of Prince Felix Yusupov, a cousin of the Tsar, and of some of

the young Grand Dukes, all of whom had determined to take the law into their own hands and rid Russia of the curse of her existence. Full details have never transpired; but the deed is believed to have been planned by Purishkevitch, and took place in the apartments of Prince Yusupov during a supper party. Rasputin was shot by one of the guests—probably Purishkevitch—and the body was afterwards thrown into an ice-hole in the Neva, where it was discovered three days later.

The relief and excitement throughout Russia was intense, as was the consternation of the Empress and her circle. Popular interest was far more concerned in the development of the Rasputin drama than in the events of the European War. The Empress thought only of revenge, and, although no definite proofs could be established, she effected the banishment of all those implicated, even remotely, in the deed, with the exception of Purishkevitch, who was politically too powerful to molest. It was hoped that the evil influence which had so long overshadowed Russia was removed; but Protopov, making the most of his opportunities, began to exercise almost as baneful an ascendency over the mind of the bereaved Tsaritsa as the defunct impostor. Through her agency, Protopov persuaded the Tsar to postpone the reassembly of the Duma, that the investigation of the Rasputin case might be continued undisturbed and the Upper House purged of members likely to oppose the policy of the new favourite.

The Duma met in February 1917. Contrary to expectation, the first sessions passed off peaceably, and were mainly devoted to discussions of the food shortage, which had lately become acute, and was undoubtedly one of the main causes of the revolution. The ignorant mass of the Russian people understood little and cared less about Government intrigues, palace

scandals and the issues of the war ; but lack of bread was an argument patent to all. There was abundance of food, but it was badly distributed. Indeed, there have been those who have not scrupled to accuse Protopov and his colleagues of creating an artificial famine, in the hopes of exasperating the people, and provoking a public agitation which would enable the ministry " to put forward the unanimous will of the nation as an imperative reason for the conclusion of a separate peace." Food was not rationed, and the Government took no steps to cope with a possible scarcity, beyond forbidding the sale of bread except at certain times ; an arrangement which resulted in long queues of half-frozen people waiting outside the shops for hours, to buy the necessary victuals for themselves and their families.

Several strikes now occurred, the coal supplies failed, many factories closed down, and crowds of unemployed, carrying red flags, marched up and down the main thoroughfares of Petrograd—as the capital was now called—demanding bread. There was no organised movement among the workmen, but it was obvious that the situation was becoming critical and that measures should have been taken to quell the growing disorder in the streets.

On Thursday, 8th March, the bakers' shops were looted by the mob, more factories stopped work and public meetings among the disaffected workmen were forcibly dispersed by the police, with, in some cases, loss of life. Next day all traffic was disorganised, the trams ceased to run, a general strike was decided upon, and serious bread riots occurred in some of the smaller districts. On Saturday the strike commenced, and revolutionary agitators began to harangue the thousands of unemployed who thronged the principal squares in the city. Beyond ordering reprisals, the Government till then had made no real effort to restore order ;

but that night Protopov placed machine guns upon the roofs of many of the houses in Petrograd, which opened fire upon the people next day (Sunday, 11th). There were numerous victims ; but towards nightfall, the Cossacks patrolling the streets joined the rioters, and a company of the Pavlovski regiment mutinied when told to fire upon the rebels.

On Monday, 12th March, the revolution may be said to have definitely begun. All the troops in Petrograd joined the insurgents, and several of the officers were shot ; the arsenal, the Petrapavlovski fortress and other important military depots surrendered to the mob ; the prisons were broken open and the inmates released ; the office of the Okhrana was sacked and burnt, with all its archives ; and the police, who were held responsible for the machine-gun slaughter of the previous day, were everywhere hunted down and massacred.

During these disturbances, the Tsaritsa was at Tsarskoe Selo, outside Petrograd, with her children, all five of whom were seriously ill with measles, while the Tsar was at Mohilev, the seat of the army headquarters. On receiving news of the insurrection in the capital, Nicholas at once telegraphed that the Duma was to be dissolved, for he probably regarded the national assembly as the main cause of the trouble. But Parliament, instead of obeying, held an extraordinary session, and passed a resolution declining to adjourn, and calling on its members to continue their attendance and to co-operate for the restoration of public order.

The same day, M. Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, telegraphed to the Tsar : " The position is serious. Anarchy prevails in the capital. The Government is paralysed. The transport of provisions and fuel is completely disorganised. The general disorganisation increases. There is disorderly firing

in the streets. The troops are firing at each other. It is necessary immediately to charge a person enjoying the confidence of the country, with the formation of a new Government. Delay is impossible. Any delay means death." Later in the day, a still more urgent telegram was sent, to the effect that the situation was becoming worse and that, before it was too late, measures to save the country and the dynasty must be taken. No reply was vouchsafed to either of these appeals. It afterwards transpired that one, if not both, of Rodzianko's telegrams was suppressed by members of the Imperial suite; while, as all newspapers had ceased, the Tsar's only knowledge of the conflict in the capital was confined to the messages of his wife, who, absorbed in her maternal anxieties, failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Nicholas, therefore, despatched a few troops under General Ivanov to restore order in Petrograd; but as these in any case would only have fraternised with the mob, they were stopped on the way, by order of the Duma.

Parliament sat continuously throughout the 11th and 12th, and, just before dawn on the 13th, Rodzianko announced to the members and to the military delegates representing the 25,000 soldiers who had given in their allegiance to the revolution, that it was necessary before all things to restore order and tranquillity, and to satisfy "the demand of the moment for the abolition of the old power and for a new power to replace it." A temporary Executive Committee of twelve members was therefore elected, to form a Provisional Government, and the "Soviet" or Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies was created at the same time, to represent the interests of the proletariat. The ministers of the former régime, including Sukhomlinov and Protopov, were then arrested and imprisoned, while telegrams were despatched, informing

the chief naval and military commands that the administrative power had passed into the hands of the Duma, and appealing for support and for the preservation of law and order. An enthusiastic response being at once received from Moscow and other cities, as well as from all branches of the navy and army, the Russian revolution was now an accomplished fact, and, save for the street fighting of the 11th and 12th, had been effected with remarkably little bloodshed.

By the 14th, comparative tranquillity reigned in Petrograd; motor lorries carrying machine guns and armed soldiers patrolled the streets by order of the Provisional Government, but there was little or no disorder. Here and there the Imperial eagles were removed from the public buildings, but otherwise the mob contented itself with parading the streets, singing revolutionary songs and cheering for liberty and the Constitution.

All classes concurred in supporting the Provisional Government, so that order was restored without difficulty. Unfortunately, the ruffianly elements inseparable from every revolution, were found, not among the masses of the people, but among the 400 delegates—nearly all Jews, with assumed Russian names, and most of them German agents—who formed the main body of the Soviet.

The Intelligents, or moderate liberals, predominated in the Executive Committee, but represented a comparative minority in national opinion. The real power lay in the hands of the labour party, who, fortified by the inclusion in their ranks of the common soldiery, exercised a strong and ultimately disastrous check upon the actions of the Duma. The Provisional Government, believing that the salvation of Russia lay in a constitutional monarchy, hoped to restore Nicholas II to the throne, under certain conditions; but the Soviet was opposed to all forms of control, other than

that of the proletariat, and wished to establish a socialist republic, with itself at the head.

The controversy between the two parties threatened to become acute, but eventually a compromise was effected through the agency of Alexander Kerensky, a young man of Jewish origin and a member of the Soviet, whose self-esteem had been flattered by his inclusion in the Provisional Government as Minister of Justice. Kerensky threw himself into the breach, and managed, by his eloquence and popularity, to obtain the Socialists' consent to the nomination of the Tsarevitch Alexis to the throne, under the regency of his uncle, the Grand Duke Michael. On this understanding therefore, M. Gutchkov, the newly-appointed War Minister, and M. Schulgin, a member of the Duma, were sent to acquaint the Tsar with the decision of the Provisional Government and to demand his abdication in favour of his son.

The Emperor's knowledge of the political occurrences of the last few days was vague, and, on 13th March, he resolved to return to Tsarskoe Selo, to investigate matters for himself. Halfway thither his train was stopped, information having been received that the line further north was in the hands of the insurgents. It was decided, therefore, to return to Pskov, to consult with General Russky, the commander-in-chief of the Northern Army. Nicholas reached Pskov on the night of the 14th, and was met by the general, who, having established telephonic communication with M. Rodzianko, was aware of the march of events in Petrograd, and had already signified his allegiance to the Provisional Government. Russky broke the news of the revolution and of the approach of the two delegates to the Tsar, who seemed dumbfounded at the intelligence, but, now that it was too late, expressed his willingness to conform to the decisions of the Duma.

The emissaries of the Provisional Government

arrived at Pskov at 10 p.m. on 15th March, and were at once conducted to the saloon in the Imperial train, where the Tsar awaited them. He listened with quiet dignity to the speech in which M. Gutchkov recapitulated the national grievances, and at the end announced his intention of renouncing the throne in accordance with the popular will, but to his brother, the Grand Duke Michael, not to the little Tsarevitch, from whom, he said, he felt he could not be parted. After a brief colloquy, the delegates agreed to this alteration, and Nicholas then wrote and signed the act of abdication, which document, by its lofty and patriotic sentiments, extorted the unwilling admiration of the deputies, and, in the words of one of them, " an immense pity for the man who, by this one action, had redeemed all the faults of the past."

In spite of this sacrifice and the efforts of the Duma, the monarchy was doomed, for the Soviet, which had only consented under pressure to its continuance, refused to permit the substitution of the Grand Duke Michael for his nephew. In the face of this opposition, the Provisional Government was obliged to give way. The Grand Duke declined to accept the crown without the united consent of the nation, and a Republican Government was formally proclaimed on 16th March, which was officially recognised by the Allied Powers a few days later.

Nothing, however, but the total extinction of the hated Romanov dynasty could satisfy the Soviet, and, in unwilling obedience to its demands, the ex-Tsar, who had returned to the army headquarters at Mohilev, was arrested, by order of the Government, on 22nd March, and conveyed to Tsarskoe Selo, where he was imprisoned in a wing of the palace, together with his wife and children.

Nicholas II presented a brave front to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He retained his courtesy

and dignity under the most trying circumstances; but, owing to the universal belief in the pro-German treachery of himself and the Tsaritsa, the first weeks of their captivity were embittered by the insults and petty annoyances heaped upon them by their revolutionary guards. Later, when an examination of their private papers by a special court of inquiry had refuted this calumny, the severity of their gaolers was considerably relaxed and a certain amount of liberty was accorded to the captives, within the limits of the palace grounds.

Kerensky speedily succumbed to the fascinating personality of the dethroned monarch and was anxious to smuggle the Imperial family out of Russia into England, where they would have been safe. But the vigilance and growing hostility of the labour party prevented the execution of this plan and rendered it increasingly dangerous to keep these living relics of an ancient tyranny within reach of the Soviet, which twice endeavoured to obtain forcible possession of their persons. In August 1917, therefore, Kerensky, who was then supreme in Russia, removed the captives for greater safety to Tobolsk in Siberia, where for the first three months they seem to have enjoyed a certain amount of comfort and consideration, in spite of the Empress's failing health and an unusually severe attack of the Tsarevitch's illness.

The Imperial family remained at Tobolsk for eight months; but with the fall of Kerensky and the inauguration of the Red Terror by Lenin and Trotsky in November 1917, the conditions of their life changed, and they suffered greatly from the coarseness and brutality of their guards. Based upon bloodshed and anarchy, the Bolshevist Government shrank from no crime to attain its ends, and the year 1918 witnessed the extermination not only of the Romanovs, but of all those whom the class-hatred and political jealousy of the Soviet federation had marked out for destruction.

Lenin was the head of the Council of Soviets which nominally controlled the various independent Bolshevik Governments in Russia; but the greater part of his authority was vested in the "Chrezvychainaia" or "Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution," which corresponded to the Okhrana of the autocratic régime, and was ruled by a ruffian named Sverdlov and a horde of revolutionary Jews. Under this man's auspices, the suppression of all anti-Bolshevik elements became the main object of the Soviet Government, and the continued existence of the leading members of the Romanov dynasty was necessarily opposed to this policy, the more that several monarchist plots had recently been discovered, which showed that the nation's devotion to its Tsar was by no means extinct. Apart from these considerations, it was important to remove the illustrious captives from the custody of the Siberian Soviet into the hands of the head organisation.

In May 1918 therefore, Yakovlev, an emissary of the Chrezvychainaia, arrived at Tobolsk, charged with a secret commission to transport the Tsar and his family to Moscow. No opposition was offered to their departure; but Yakovlev's mission was betrayed to the local authorities, and the train conveying the captives was stopped at Ekaterinburg, in the government of Perm, by the Red Guards of the Uralian Soviet, which had long resented the domination of Moscow and had no intention of resigning the Imperial hostages into its rival's hands. Yakovlev's warrant was ignored, and he was forced to proceed on his journey without the prisoners, who were taken out of the train and confined in an empty house in Ekaterinburg, under the charge of Yurovsky, a peasant Jew. Sverdlov's efforts to obtain possession of the Romanovs were foiled; nevertheless, he continued to control their destinies through the agency of his tools in the

local Soviet ; and the execution of his ultimate purpose was merely postponed.

For the next two months, the Tsar and his family were immured, day and night, in two small rooms, subject to every kind of mental, moral and physical indignity, yet preserving hope and courage in spite of their sufferings, and remaining entirely unsuspicious of their approaching fate. At the end of that time the signal from Moscow was given. At midnight on 16th July, Nicholas II and his wife, their four young daughters, the little Tsarevitch Alexis, and four attendants were driven into the basement of the house where they were imprisoned, and were shot or clubbed to death with revolvers, their bodies being afterwards taken to the woods and completely destroyed by fire.

The murderers made every effort to escape detection, and took elaborate precautions to conceal the evidences of their crime. They also issued official proclamations, announcing the hurried execution of the ex-Tsar, after a trial before a Bolshevik tribunal, owing to "the approach of Czecho-Slovak bands and the discovery of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy to wrest the tyrant from the Uralian Soviet by armed force." But they expressly mentioned that the ex-Tsaritsa and her children had been removed from Ekaterinburg to a place of greater safety. Later, as the truth about the wholesale massacre of their victims began to leak out, the Soviet changed the tone of its announcements, and, having invented details of a mock funeral at Ekaterinburg, it reported the imaginary trial and execution of five fictitious assassins in 1919.

The facts, however, are as stated. The murder was planned and ordered by the Chrezvychainaia from Moscow ; and the actual executioners not only remained at large, but were promoted to high honour under the Bolshevik Government.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AFTERMATH

THE destinies of Russia are yet in the melting-pot, and it is difficult, amid the disorganisation which still prevails, to form any accurate idea of the events which have contributed to this state of general anarchy.

The Provisional Government elected by the Duma in March 1917 had the welfare of the nation genuinely at heart. It did its best to create order out of chaos and to fulfil Russia's obligations to her allies, by a vigorous prosecution of the war; but the persistently obstructive attitude of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies prevented any effective measures towards the attainment of these ends.

From the moment of its inception, the Soviet had shown itself resentful of its subordination to the Duma, and determined, by means of its military supporters, to assert its supremacy and concentrate the administrative power in its own hands. As already mentioned, the Council was composed almost entirely of Jews, and Jews in German pay, who were introduced by that Government into Russia, for the sole purpose of demoralising the nation by the spread of Bolshevist propaganda. Led by Cheidze, by Lenin (*alias* Lehmann or Ulianov), by Trotsky (*alias* Leo Braunstein) and by other Hebrews, these agents did their work faithfully and well. They attained to supreme power in the Soviet, and succeeded, not only in undermining the authority of the Duma and

promoting dissension between class and class, but in hastening the disintegration of the nation by the destruction of its military power. Backed by the army and by the mass of the Russian people, the Soviet could dictate its own terms to the Provisional Government, which soon became a mere tool in the hands of these foreign tyrants, compelled to submit its measures for their approval and to sanction any decree they might choose to issue.

The most disastrous of these edicts was the famous Order No. I, by which military discipline was destroyed, the fraternisation of all ranks insisted upon, and official authority replaced by moral suasion. Thus encouraged, the rapid degeneration of the Russian army was assured ; the desertion, drunkenness and immorality of the troops increased to an appalling extent ; all drill and discipline ceased ; corporal punishment and the death penalty were forbidden and the authority of the officers was openly defied. In such circumstances, mutinies in the navy and army became frequent. Alexiev, Brusilov and other generals of the old régime, finding their position intolerable, relinquished their commands ; while M. Gutchkov, the War Minister, who had protested in vain against the innovations, resigned, his example being speedily followed by Miliukov and by other members of the Government.

A second Coalition ministry was formed in May, with a preponderance of Socialist-Revolutionaries, and with Kerensky as Minister for War. But the Soviet continued to exercise all real authority, and the Government was powerless to check the anarchy which the Bolsheviks disseminated broadcast through the land.

The main question before the country was the continuation of the war ; and the nation, with but few exceptions, wished for peace. The proletariat, under-

standing nothing of the issues involved, yearned for the ease and plenty promised them by their own fireside under the new régime; while the Soviet, true to its Teutonic allegiance, wanted peace at once, and at any cost to Russia, provided that all humiliation of Germany was avoided.

Kerensky, on the other hand, more prescient and more patriotic than his fellows, desired the prosecution of the war to a victorious conclusion and hoped to reanimate the army by his eloquence and by the stimulus of his own ardour. Clad in khaki, he toured the Front, urging the troops to do their duty, and, by July, he had roused sufficient enthusiasm among the men, to permit of an advance against the Austrians in Galicia. At first all went well. Halicz and Kalusz were captured, and it was hoped that the Russian forces were about to repeat their successes at the beginning of the war. But before long, Bolshevist propaganda and the demoralisation of the army began to tell; supplies and ammunition failed; and the soldiers, abandoning their arms and their positions, refused to fight any longer against their "Socialist brothers in the German army," and commenced a retreat, which degenerated into the most shameful rout ever known in military history.

The Soviet, which had all along protested against the offensive, rejoiced openly at this disaster; while Lenin, profiting by the general consternation, endeavoured to overthrow the ministry by a counter-revolution in Petrograd. The attempt failed, however, and the Soviet leader fled in disguise to Kronstadt, which thenceforward became his headquarters and the centre of Bolshevist intrigue.

A new Coalition Government was formed, with Kerensky as Prime Minister and General Kornilov as commander-in-chief of the Russian armies; while a Congress, comprising all shades of political opinion

was opened at Moscow, on 25th August, to discuss the best means of averting the numerous internal and external dangers which threatened the empire. Kornilov, putting his finger upon the two evils which were sapping the strength of the nation at its roots, counselled drastic measures to restore military discipline, and the suppression of Bolshevist propaganda. But such a course of action was directly opposed to the policy of the Soviet, then too powerful to be attacked with impunity, and Kerensky, in his own interests, was not prepared to run the risk.

The Congress accomplished nothing, and Kornilov's warnings were ignored. The Germans entered Riga, almost unopposed, in September, and the road to Petrograd lay open before them.

Kornilov, seeing that without immediate and energetic action the country was lost, decided to take the law into his own hands and to create a military dictatorship, with himself at its head and Kerensky as his coadjutor. He communicated these intentions to the Prime Minister, who appeared to consent; but in reality, Kerensky, though quite willing to concur in part of this programme, had no desire to play a secondary part. He therefore denounced Kornilov as a traitor, and threw himself upon the support of that very Soviet which he had hoped, with the general's assistance, to destroy.

Assisted by Cossack troops under General Krymov, Kornilov marched on Petrograd, but the desertion of Kerensky had ruined his cause. The people and the common soldiery, believing that the revolution was in danger, rallied against him; and the two generals, seeing the hopelessness of the situation, surrendered to the Provisional Government. Krymov committed suicide, while Kornilov was imprisoned and eventually murdered by the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky remained supreme, and, having dissolved

the Provisional Government and the Duma on his own initiative, he proclaimed a republic, with himself in the double office of President and commander-in chief, assisted by General Dukhonin as his chief of staff and an administrative council of five members. He had triumphed; but his efforts to suppress Bolshevism had estranged the Soviet which had originally placed him in power, while the people and the army distrusted him as a "*bourgeois*," or counter-revolutionary.

In October, the Germans commenced their offensive in the Baltic. They overran the Dvina, entirely unresisted by the Russian troops; and Kerensky, now that it was too late, began to take measures to reorganise the services and to enforce discipline. This, however, was tantamount to open defiance of the Soviet, which continued to denounce the war; and the Bolshevik leaders promptly issued their celebrated manifesto demanding immediate peace between all belligerents, "without either annexations or indemnities," and prepared to crush their rival.

In November 1917, Lenin and Trotsky raised a body of Red Guards, and having proclaimed a Revolutionary Committee in place of the existing ministry, they called on the citizens and garrison of Petrograd to arrest Kerensky and to end the war. The appeal was answered by most of the troops in the capital, who seized the State Bank and other important buildings and proceeded to besiege the President and his colleagues in the Winter Palace, where they had taken refuge, defended only by the Women's Death Battalion and some boys from the military college. Kerensky escaped, and put himself at the head of a few Cossack divisions, with which he hoped to defend his Government; but such of his troops as had not already deserted to the Bolsheviks were defeated by the Red

Guards at Tsarskoe Selo on 13th November, and Kerensky fled the country.

Dukhonin then assumed the post of commander-in-chief, and, ignoring Lenin's orders to arrange an armistice with the Central Powers, he prepared to continue the war. The army, however, refused to support him, and the unfortunate general was arrested at Mohilev, and subsequently murdered by the Bolsheviks.

The Government of Russia then passed into the hands of the " All Russia Congress of Soviets," with Lenin at its head, Trotsky as the " People's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs," and Krilenko—a private and a Jew, whose real name was Aaron Abrams—as commander-in-chief. Negotiations were at once opened with the Central Powers, and an armistice was concluded in December, preliminary to the discussion of peace terms, which began at Brest-Litovsk on the 23rd, between Trotsky, the German von Kuhlman, and the Austrian representative, Count Czernin.

The controversy between the three plenipotentiaries was protracted and bitter; for Germany, acting on the maxim that might is right, declined to adhere to the Russian stipulations for peace without annexations or contributions, and laid claim not only to a large war indemnity, but to all the conquered districts in Poland, Courland, Lithuania, Esthonia and Livonia. Twice Trotsky broke up the Conference as a protest against these demands for a " most monstrous annexation "; but the German occupation of Russian territory, from Reval to Minsk and Pskov, and the non-existence of a Russian army, rendered his resistance futile and compelled him in the end to accept the humiliating terms offered him from Berlin.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on 18th March 1918. Russia thereby concluded a separate peace with the Central Powers, and agreed to pay

tribute ; to abandon the Baltic Provinces, Poland and Lithuania ; to surrender Armenia and the Caucasus to Turkey ; and to recognise the independence of the Ukraine, which had declared itself a separate republic under General Petlura in 1917.

Thus shorn of her possessions, her independence destroyed, her military, political and financial prestige ruined, Russia sank to the level of a German dependency, and her betrayers were free to consolidate their own power and to promote the projected " Universal Federation of Proletariats," which was to reform the social and industrial world. The immediate result was an internecine warfare between the Red armies of Bolshevism and the White or anti-Bolshevik forces of the numerous provinces which declined to submit to Soviet rule, and formed themselves into independent Governments, either on their own initiative, as in the case of General Denikin in the South, or, like Admiral Koltchak, in North Russia and Siberia, with the aid of foreign legions.

The Bolsheviks, however, continued to sow the wind of which Russia still reaps the whirlwind, and by means of indiscriminate slaughter, mob-rule and general anarchy to establish the Red Terror throughout the land. Bolshevik tyranny far surpassed the worst evils of autocracy, and the boasted liberty, equality and universal brotherhood of the communal system degenerated into an organised chaos, founded on bloodshed and crime.

By the end of 1919, famine, misrule and violence had reduced the population in the two Bolshevik centres of Moscow and Petrograd to less than half their former numbers ; trade, agriculture, education, and indeed all forms of civilisation in Russia were at a standstill. The necessities of life in many places were unprocurable ; the financial condition of the country was hopeless, and paper money was the only currency.

Religion being regarded as "counter-revolutionary," the churches and monasteries were closed, and, as illiterate felons of the lowest type were raised to high positions in the Government, corruption was intensified, the judicial system was discarded and there were no laws other than the arbitrary decrees of the "Komissars" or Soviet officials. Freedom of thought and speech, political emancipation and personal liberty ceased to exist, and assassination was the recognised penalty for all breach of Bolshevik regulations, or criticism of the Bolshevik rule.

In the course of the last three years, however, the political genius of Lenin and Trotsky not only consolidated the position of these two men, but even imparted some appearance of stability to the Soviet régime. After the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918 and the consequent nullification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Russian Republic declared war on the allies, as representatives of a social system which Bolshevism was pledged to destroy. This aggressive attitude, combined with its early excesses, caused the Great Powers at the Peace Conference in London in 1920, to declare the Moscow Soviet outside the pale of political civilisation, and, for the time being, diplomatic intercourse between Russia and Western Europe practically ceased. Since then, the conciliatory advances of the Communist leaders have caused this embargo to be withdrawn; and although the Russian Soviet is not yet officially recognised by the Great Powers, its Government is in constant touch with other States.

The murder of Admiral Koltchak in 1920, by Bolshevik emissaries, paralysed the resistance of the rival republic of Siberia and North-West Russia, while the same year witnessed the gradual dispersal of the other White forces, with the execution or exile of their various leaders. This triumph of the Red armies

resulted in the constitution of the Allied Federation of Soviet Republics; and at the present time, the former Russian empire comprises the Central Soviet of All Russia, with Moscow as its seat of Government, together with the autonomous dependent republics of White Russia, the Ukraine, Transcaucasia and the Far East.

Till recently, the internal condition of Russia was disastrous. The crops failed, commerce and financial enterprise were at a standstill and the railway transport collapsed. Constant dissensions with Poland and with other Soviet republics have added to the national unrest, and the Red army is mainly composed of foreign mercenaries, many of whom are Chinese.

But in the course of 1922–23, there has been a marked improvement in some respects, which improvement is attributed by experts to the gradual decline of communism throughout the land. Lenin is dead, Trotsky is ill, and internal discord has completed the disorganisation of the Bolshevik party. There is no open opposition, and the Soviet Government now extends its influence over the greater part of the former Russian empire; but its brutal and despotic methods have rendered it hateful to the majority of the population. Private trade is developing within the country; there are banks and law courts, of a kind; a good harvest has put an end to famine; strenuous efforts are being made to educate the masses and to improve the condition of the agrarian peasant; and fraternity and equality exist, in so far that class distinctions have been abolished and that "Comrade" is now the recognised form of address. But the liberty of Russia under the communist system is that of the worst days of the autocracy. The press is severely censored; and the Che-ka (Chrezvychainaia), or Political State Department as it is now called, still flourishes, with the right to pass death sentences without pre-

liminary judicial investigation and to condemn to exile, without trial, all anti-Soviet suspects. The acute shortage of funds continues and unemployment has become a serious problem.

Russia has drunk the cup of her humiliation to the dregs, and there is as yet no one to whisper words of hope in her ear, or to raise her from the depths whither Soviet rule and the Bolshevik domination have flung her. The Republican Government has come to stay, apparently; but there are many who still believe that "the security of Russia lay in the invulnerability of Tsardom," and that the demolition of her most sacred symbol demolished at the same time all that was best and noblest in the national character. Whether autocracy or democracy be best for Russia, who, judging by past and present history, can decide? "Only let there be Order, were it under the Soldier's sword; let there be Peace, that the bounty of the Heavens be not split; that what of Wisdom they do send us, bring forth fruit in its season! . . . Sansculottism, having now got deep enough, is to perish in a new and singular system of Culottism and Arrangement. For Arrangement is indispensable to man; Arrangement, were it grounded only on that old primary Evangel of Force, with Sceptre in the shape of Hammer! . . . and then—O Reader!—Courage, I see land."

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